POETRY

BY ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

Mayou. Pinxt. *J. Brown. sc.*

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

(IN EARLY YOUTH)

A Selection

FROM THE POETRY

OF

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

C. Mignaty pinxt. J. Saddler sculpt.

SITTING-ROOM IN CASA GUIDI,
JUNE, 1861

London:
Smith, Elder & Co. 15, Waterloo Place

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NINTH EDITION.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE.
1879.

It has been attempted to retain and to dispose the characteristics of the general poetry, whence this is an abstract, according to an order which should allow them the prominency and effect they seem to possess when considered in the larger, not exclusively the lesser works of the poet. A musician might say, such and such chords are repeated, others made subordinate by distribution, so that a single movement may imitate the progress of the whole symphony. But there are various ways of modulating up to and connecting any given harmonies; and it will be neither a surprise nor a pain to find that better could have been done, as to both selection and sequence, than, in the present case, all care and the profoundest veneration were able to do.

R. B.

London, November, 1865.

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POETRY

BY ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN.

NINE years old! The first of any
Seem the happiest years that come:
Yet when *I* was nine, I said
No such word! I thought instead
That the Greeks had used as many
In besieging Ilium.

Nine green years had scarcely brought me
To my childhood's haunted spring;
I had life, like flowers and bees,
In betwixt the country trees,
And the sun the pleasure taught me
Which he teacheth everything.

If the rain fell, there was sorrow,
Little head leant on the pane,
Little finger drawing down it
The long trailing drops upon it,
And the 'Rain, rain, come to-morrow,'
Said for charm against the rain.

Such a charm was right Canidian
Though you meet it with a jeer!
If I said it long enough,
Then the rain hummed dimly off
And the thrush with his pure Lydian
Was left only to the ear;

And the sun and I together
Went a-rushing out of doors:
We our tender spirits drew
Over hill and dale in view,
Glimmering hither, glimmering thither,
In the footsteps of the showers.

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,
Through the grasses wet and fair,
Straight I sought my garden-ground
With the laurel on the mound,
And the pear-tree oversweeping
A side-shadow of green air.

In the garden lay supinely
A huge giant wrought of spade!
Arms and legs were stretched at length
In a passive giant strength,—
The fine meadow turf, cut finely,
Round them laid and interlaid.

Call him Hector, son of Priam!
Such his title and degree.
With my rake I smoothed his brow,
Both his cheeks I weeded through,
But a rhymer such as I am,
Scarce can sing his dignity.

Eyes of gentianellas azure,
Staring, winking at the skies;
Nose of gillyflowers and box;
Scented grasses put for locks,
Which a little breeze at pleasure
Set a-waving round his eyes:

Brazen helm of daffodillies,
With a glitter toward the light;
Purple violets for the mouth,
Breathing perfumes west and south;
And a sword of flashing lilies,
Holden ready for the fight:

And a breastplate made of daisies,
Closely fitting, leaf on leaf;
Periwinkles interlaced
Drawn for belt about the waist;
While the brown bees, humming praises,
Shot their arrows round the chief.

And who knows, (I sometimes wondered,)
If the disembodied soul
Of old Hector, once of Troy,
Might not take a dreary joy
Here to enter—if it thundered,
Rolling up the thunder-roll?

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,
In this body rude and rife
Just to enter, and take rest
'Neath the daisies of the breast—
They, with tender roots, renewing
His heroic heart to life?

Who could know? I sometimes started
At a motion or a sound!
Did his mouth speak—naming Troy
With an ὀτοτοτοτοῖ?
Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted
Make the daisies tremble round?

It was hard to answer, often:
But the birds sang in the tree,
But the little birds sang bold
In the pear-tree green and old,
And my terror seemed to soften
Through the courage of their glee.

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy
And white blossoms sleek with rain!
Oh, my garden rich with pansies!
Oh, my childhood's bright romances!
All revive, like Hector's body,
And I see them stir again.

And despite life's changes, chances,
And despite the deathbell's toll,
They press on me in full seeming:
Help, some angel! stay this dreaming!
As the birds sang in the branches,
Sing God's patience through my soul!

That no dreamer, no neglecter
Of the present's work unsped,
I may wake up and be doing,
Life's heroic ends pursuing,
Though my past is dead as Hector,
And though Hector is twice dead.

THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST

LITTLE Ellie sits alone
'Mid the beeches of a meadow
By a stream-side on the grass,
And the trees are showering down
Doubles of their leaves in shadow
On her shining hair and face.

She has thrown her bonnet by,
And her feet she has been dipping
In the shallow water's flow:
Now she holds them nakedly
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
While she rocketh to and fro.

Little Ellie sits alone,
And the smile she softly uses
Fills the silence like a speech
While she thinks what shall be done,
And the sweetest pleasure chooses
For her future within reach.

Little Ellie in her smile
Chooses—'I will have a lover,
Riding on a steed of steeds:
He shall love me without guile,
And to *him* I will discover
The swan's nest among the reeds.

'And the steed shall be red-roan,
And the lover shall be noble,
With an eye that takes the breath:
And the lute he plays upon
Shall strike ladies into trouble,
As his sword strikes men to death.

'And the steed it shall be shod
All in silver, housed in azure,
And the mane shall swim the wind;
And the hoofs along the sod
Shall flash onward and keep measure,
Till the shepherds look behind.

'But my lover will not prize
All the glory that he rides in,
When he gazes in my face:
He will say, 'O Love, thine eyes
Build the shrine my soul abides in,
And I kneel here for thy grace!'

'Then, ay, then he shall kneel low,
With the red-roan steed anear him
Which shall seem to understand,
Till I answer, 'Rise and go!
For the world must love and fear him
Whom I gift with heart and hand.'

'Then he will arise so pale,
I shall feel my own lips tremble
With a *yes* I must not say,
Nathless maiden-brave, 'Farewell,'
I will utter, and dissemble—
'Light to-morrow with to-day!'

'Then he'll ride among the hills
To the wide world past the river,
There to put away all wrong;
To make straight distorted wills,
And to empty the broad quiver
Which the wicked bear along.

'Three times shall a young foot-page
Swim the stream and climb the mountain
And kneel down beside my feet—
'Lo, my master sends this gage,
Lady, for thy pity's counting!
What wilt thou exchange for it?'

'And the first time, I will send
A white rosebud for a guerdon,
And the second time, a glove;
But the third time—I may bend
From my pride, and answer—'Pardon,
If he comes to take my love.'

'Then the young foot-page will run,
Then my lover will ride faster,
Till he kneeleth at my knee:
'I am a duke's eldest son,
Thousand serfs do call me master,
But, O Love, I love but *thee*!'

'He will kiss me on the mouth
Then, and lead me as a lover
Through the crowds that praise his deeds:
And, when soul-tied by one troth,
Unto *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds.'

Little Ellie, with her smile
Not yet ended, rose up gaily,
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,
And went homeward round a mile,
Just to see, as she did daily,
What more eggs were with the two.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,
Winding up the stream, light-hearted,
Where the osier pathway leads,
Past the boughs she stoops—and stops.
Lo, the wild swan had deserted,
And a rat had gnawed the reeds!

Ellie went home sad and slow.
If she found the lover ever,
With his red-roan steed of steeds,
Sooth I know not; but I know
She could never show him—never,
That swan's nest among the reeds!

THE LOST BOWER.

In the pleasant orchard-closes,
'God bless all our gains,' say we;
But 'May God bless all our losses,'
Better suits with our degree.
Listen, gentle—ay, and simple! listen, children on the knee!

Green the land is where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played,
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade;
Summer-snow of apple-blossoms running up from glade to glade.

There is one hill I see nearer,
In my vision of the rest;
And a little wood seems clearer
As it climbeth from the west,
Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to the airy upland crest.

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
And, completing the ascent,
Where the wind blows and sun dazzles
Thrills in leafy tremblement,
Like a heart that after climbing beateth quickly through content.

Not a step the wood advances
O'er the open hill-tops bound ;
There, in green arrest, the branches
See their image on the ground :
You may walk beneath them smiling, glad with sight and glad with sound.

For you harken on your right hand,
How the birds do leap and call
In the greenwood, out of sight and
Out of reach and fear of all ;
And the squirrels crack the filberts through their cheerful madrigal.

On your left, the sheep are cropping
The slant grass and daisies pale,
And five apple-trees stand dropping
Separate shadows towards the vale
Over which, in choral silence, the hills look you their 'All hail !'

Far out, kindled by each other,
Shining hills on hills arise,
Close as brother leans to brother
When they press beneath the eyes
Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of paradise.

While beyond, above them mounted,
And above their woods alsò,
Malvern hills, for mountains counted
Not unduly, loom a-row—
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions through the sunshine and the snow.

Yet, in childhood, little prized I
That fair walk and fair survey;
'Twas a straight walk unadvised by
The least mischief worth a nay;
Up and down—as dull as grammar on the eve of holiday.

But the wood, all close and clenching
Bough in bough and root in root,—
No more sky (for over-branching)
At your head than at your foot,—
Oh, the wood drew me within it by a glamour past dispute!

Few and broken paths showed through it,
Where the sheep had tried to run,—
Forced with snowy wool to strew it
Round the thickets, when anon
They, with silly thorn-pricked noses, bleated back into the sun.

But my childish heart beat stronger
Than those thickets dared to grow:
I could pierce them! *I* could longer
Travel on, methought, than so:
Sheep for sheep-paths! braver children climb and creep where they would go.

And the poets wander, (said I,)
Over places all as rude:
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
Sat to meet him in a wood:
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out pure with solitude.

And if Chaucer had not travelled
Through a forest by a well,
He had never dreamt nor marvelled
At those ladies fair and fell
Who lived smiling without loving in their island-citadel.

Thus I thought of the old singers
And took courage from their song,
Till my little struggling fingers
Tore asunder gyve and thong
Of the brambles which entrapped me, and the barrier branches strong.

On a day, such pastime keeping,
With a fawn's heart debonair,
Under-crawling, overleaping
Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,
I stood suddenly astonied—I was gladdened unaware.

From the place I stood in, floated
Back the covert dim and close,
And the open ground was coated
Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,
And the blue-bell's purple presence signed it worthily across.

Here a linden-tree stood, bright'ning
All adown its silver rind;
For as some trees draw the lightning,
So this tree, unto my mind,
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine from the sky where it was shrined.

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
An old hawthorn also grew;
And wood-ivy like a spirit
Hovered dimly round the two,
Shaping thence that bower of beauty which I sing of thus to you.

'Twas a bower for garden fitter
Than for any woodland wide:
Though a fresh and dewy glitter
Struck it through from side to side,
Shaped and shaven was the freshness, as by garden-cunning plied.

Oh, a lady might have come there,
Hooded fairly like her hawk,
With a book or lute in summer,
And a hope of sweeter talk,—
Listening less to her own music than for footsteps on the walk!

But that bower appeared a marvel
In the wildness of the place;
With such seeming art and travail,
Finely fixed and fitted was
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the summit from the base.

And the ivy veined and glossy
Was enwrought with eglantine;
And the wild hop fibred closely,
And the large-leaved columbine,
Arch of door and window-mullion, did right sylvanly entwine.

Rose-trees either side the door were
Growing lithe and growing tall,
Each one set, a summer warder
For the keeping of the hall,—
With a red rose and a white rose, leaning, nodding at the wall.

As I entered, mosses hushing
Stole all noises from my foot ;
And a green elastic cushion,
Clasped within the linden's root,
Took me in a chair of silence very rare and absolute.

All the floor was paved with glory,
Greenly, silently inlaid
(Through quick motions made before me)
With fair counterparts in shade
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which slanted overhead.

'Is such pavement in a palace?'
So I questioned in my thought :
The sun, shining through the chalice
Of the red rose hung without,
Threw within a red libation, like an answer to my doubt.

At the same time, on the linen
Of my childish lap there fell
Two white may-leaves, downward winning
Through the ceiling's miracle,
From a blossom, like an angel, out of sight yet blessing well.

Down to floor and up to ceiling
Quick I turned my childish face,
With an innocent appealing
For the secret of the place
To the trees, which surely knew it in partaking of the grace.

Where's no foot of human creature
How could reach a human hand?
And if this be work of nature,
Why has nature turned so bland,
Breaking off from other wild-work? It was hard to understand.

Was she weary of rough-doing,
Of the bramble and the thorn?
Did she pause in tender rueing
Here of all her sylvan scorn?
Or in mock of art's deceiving was the sudden mildness worn?

Or could this same bower (I fancied)
Be the work of Dryad strong,
Who, surviving all that chancëd
In the world's old pagan wrong,
Lay hid, feeding in the woodland on the last true poet's song?

Or was this the house of fairies,
Left, because of the rough ways,
Unassoiled by Ave Marys
Which the passing pilgrim prays,
And beyond St. Catherine's chiming on the blessed Sabbath days?

So, young muser, I sat listening
To my fancy's wildest word:
On a sudden, through the glistening
Leaves around, a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music which was rather felt than heard.

Softly, finely, it enwound me;
From the world it shut me in,—
Like a fountain falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin
Clips a little water Naiad sitting smilingly within.

Whence the music came, who knoweth?
I know nothing: but indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed
Which has sucked the milk of waters at the oldest river-head.

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness! when the lark,
The high planets overtaking
In the half-evanished Dark,
Casts his singing to their singing, like an arrow to the mark.

Never nightingale so singeth:
Oh, she leans on thorny tree
And her poet-song she flingeth
Over pain to victory!
Yet she never sings such music,—or she sings it not to me.

Never blackbirds, never thrushes
Nor small finches sing so sweet,
When the sun strikes through the bushes
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways to the summer heavens complete.

If it *were* a bird, it seemëd
Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
He of green and azure dreamëd,
While it sat in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady, singing nigh her silent mouth.

If it *were* a bird?—ah, sceptic,
Give me 'yea' or give me 'nay'—
Though my soul were nympholeptic
As I heard that virëlay,
You may stoop your pride to pardon, for my sin is far away!

I rose up in exaltation
And an inward trembling heat,
And (it seemed) in geste of passion
Dropped the music to my feet
Like a garment rustling downwards—such a silence followed it!

Heart and head beat through the quiet
Full and heavily, though slower:
In the song, I think, and by it,
Mystic Presences of power
Had up-snatched me to the Timeless, then returned me to the Hour.

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In a child-abstraction lifted,
Straightway from the bower I past,
Foot and soul being dimly drifted
Through the greenwood, till, at last,
In the hill-top's open sunshine I all consciously was cast.

Face to face with the true mountains
I stood silently and still,
Drawing strength from fancy's dauntings,
From the air about the hill
And from Nature's open mercies and most debonair goodwill.

Oh, the golden-hearted daisies
Witnessed there, before my youth,
To the truth of things, with praises
Of the beauty of the truth;
And I woke to Nature's real, laughing joyfully for both.

And I said within me, laughing,
'I have found a bower to-day,
A green lusus, fashioned half in
Chance and half in Nature's play;
And a little bird sings nigh it, I will nevermore missay.

'Henceforth, *I* will be the fairy
Of this bower not built by one;
I will go there, sad or merry,
With each morning's benison,
And the bird shall be my harper in the dream-hall I have won.'

So I said. But the next morning,
(—Child, look up into my face—
'Ware, oh sceptic, of your scorning!
This is truth in its pure grace!)
The next morning all had vanished, or my wandering missed the place.

Bring an oath most sylvan-holy,
And upon it swear me true—
By the wind-bells swinging slowly
Their mute curfews in the dew,
By the advent of the snow-drop, by the rosemary and rue,—

I affirm by all or any,
Let the cause be charm or chance,
That my wandering searches many
Missed the bower of my romance—
That I nevermore upon it turned my mortal countenance.

I affirm that, since I lost it,
Never bower has seemed so fair;
Never garden-creeper crossed it
With so deft and brave an air,
Never bird sung in the summer, as I saw and heard them there.

Day by day, with new desire,
Toward my wood I ran in faith,
Under leaf and over brier,
Through the thickets, out of breath;
Like the prince who rescued Beauty from the sleep as long as death.

But his sword of mettle clashëd,
And his arm smote strong, I ween,
And her dreaming spirit flashëd
Through her body's fair white screen,
And the light thereof might guide him up the cedar alleys green :

But for me I saw no splendour—
All my sword was my child-heart ;
And the wood refused surrender
Of that bower it held apart,
Safe as Œdipus's grave-place 'mid Colone's olives swart.

As Aladdin sought the basements
His fair palace rose upon,
And the four-and-twenty casements
Which gave answers to the sun ;
So, in wilderment of gazing, I looked up and I looked down.

Years have vanished since, as wholly
As the little bower did then ;
And you call it tender folly
That such thoughts should come again ?
Ah, I cannot change this sighing for your smiling, brother men !

For this loss it did prefigure
Other loss of better good,
When my soul, in spirit vigour
And in ripened womanhood,
Fell from visions of more beauty than an arbour in a wood.

I have lost—oh, many a pleasure,
Many a hope and many a power—
Studious health and merry leisure,
The first dew on the first flower!
But the first of all my losses was the losing of the bower.

I have lost the dream of Doing,
And the other dream of Done,
The first spring in the pursuing,
The first pride in the Begun,—
First recoil from incompletion, in the face of what is won—

Exaltations in the far light
Where some cottage only is;
Mild dejections in the starlight,
Which the sadder-hearted miss;
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet for the very shame of bliss.

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
Which the thunder could not break;
Something too of the strong leaping
Of the staglike heart awake,
Which the pale is low for keeping in the road it ought to take.

Some respect to social fictions
Has been also lost by me;
And some generous genuflexions,
Which my spirit offered free
To the pleasant old conventions of our false humanity.

All my losses did I tell you,
Ye perchance would look away,—
Ye would answer me, 'Farewell! you
Make sad company to-day,
And your tears are falling faster than the bitter words you say.'

For God placed me like a dial
In the open ground with power,
And my heart had for its trial
All the sun and all the shower:
And I suffered many losses,—and my first was of the bower.

Laugh you? If that loss of mine be
Of no heavy-seeming weight—
When the cone falls from the pine-tree,
The young children laugh thereat;
Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and the tempest shall be great.

One who knew me in my childhood
In the glamour and the game,
Looking on me long and mild, would
Never know me for the same.
Come, unchanging recollections, where those changes overcame!

By this couch I weakly lie on,
While I count my memories,—
Through the fingers which, still sighing,
I press closely on mine eyes,—
Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I behold the bower arise.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
Stroked with light adown its rind;
And the ivy-leaves serenely
Each in either intertwined;
And the rose-trees at the doorway, they have neither grown nor pined.

From those overblown faint roses
Not a leaf appeareth shed,
And that little bud discloses
Not a thorn's-breadth more of red
For the winters and the summers which have passed me overhead.

And that music overfloweth,
Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves:
Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth?
Fay or Faunus—who believes?
But my heart still trembles in me to the trembling of the leaves.

Is the bower lost, then? who sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost?
Hark! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the solstice and the frost,—
And the prayer preserves it greenly, to the last and uttermost.

Till another open for me
In God's Eden-land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at His throne;
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees, singing—'All is lost . . . and won!'

THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds
And a young page at his side,
From the holy war in Palestine
Did slow and thoughtful ride,
As each were a palmer and told for beads
The dews of the eventide.

'O young page,' said the knight,
'A noble page art thou!
Thou fearest not to steep in blood
The curls upon thy brow;
And once in the tent, and twice in the fight,
Didst ward me a mortal blow.'

'O brave knight,' said the page,
'Or ere we hither came,
We talked in tent, we talked in field,
Of the bloody battle-game;
But here, below this greenwood bough,
I cannot speak the same.

'Our troop is far behind,
The woodland calm is new;
Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled hoofs,
Tread deep the shadows through;
And in my mind, some blessing kind
Is dropping with the dew.

'The woodland calm is pure—
I cannot choose but have
A thought from these, o' the beechen-trees
Which in our England wave,
And of the little finches fine
Which sang there while in Palestine
The warrior hilt we drave.

'Methinks, a moment gone,
I heard my mother pray!
I heard, sir knight, the prayer for me
Wherein she passed away;
And I know the heavens are leaning down
To hear what I shall say.'

The page spake calm and high,
As of no mean degree;
Perhaps he felt in nature's broad
Full heart, his own was free:
And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,
Then answered smilingly—

'Sir page, I pray your grace!
Certes, I meant not so
To cross your pastoral mood, sir page,
With the crook of the battle-bow;
But a knight may speak of a lady's face,
I ween, in any mood or place,
If the grasses die or grow.

'And this I meant to say—
My lady's face shall shine
As ladies' faces use, to greet

My page from Palestine;
Or, speak she fair or prank she gay,
She is no lady of mine.

'And this I meant to fear—
Her bower may suit thee ill;
For, sooth, in that same field and tent,
Thy *talk* was somewhat still:
And fitter thy hand for my knightly spear
Than thy tongue for my lady's will!'

Slowly and thankfully
The young page bowed his head;
His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
Until he blushed instead,
And no lady in her bower, pardiè,
Could blush more sudden red:
'Sir Knight,—thy lady's bower to me
Is suited well,' he said.

Beati, beati mortui!
From the convent on the sea,
One mile off, or scarce so nigh,
Swells the dirge as clear and high
As if that, over brake and lea,
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers burning o'er it,
And the lady Abbess dead before it,
And the chanting nuns whom yesterweek
Her voice did charge and bless,—
Chanting steady, chanting meek,
Chanting with a solemn breath
Because that they are thinking less
Upon the dead than upon death.

Beati, beati mortui!
Now the vision in the sound
Wheeleth on the wind around;
Now it sweepeth back, away—
The uplands will not let it stay
To dark the western sun:
Mortui!—away at last,—
Or ere the page's blush is past:
And the knight heard all, and the page heard none.

'A boon, thou noble knight,
If ever I servëd thee!
Though thou art a knight and I am a page,
Now grant a boon to me;
And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,
If little loved or loved aright
Be the face of thy ladye.'

Gloomily looked the knight—
'As a son thou hast servëd me,
And would to none I had granted boon
Except to only thee!
For haply then I should love aright,
For then I should know if dark or bright
Were the face of my ladye.

'Yet it ill suits my knightly tongue
To grudge that granted boon,
That heavy price from heart and life
I paid in silence down;
The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine
My father's fame: I swear by mine,
That price was nobly won!

'Earl Walter was a brave old earl,
He was my father's friend;
And while I rode the lists at court
And little guessed the end,
My noble father in his shroud
Against a slanderer lying loud
He rose up to defend.

'Oh, calm below the marble grey
My father's dust was strown!
Oh, meek above the marble grey
His image prayed alone!
The slanderer lied: the wretch was brave—
For, looking up the minster-nave,
He saw my father's knightly glaive
Was changed from steel to stone.

'Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
With a brave old hand to wear it,
And dashed the lie back in the mouth
Which lied against the godly truth
And against the knightly merit:
The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,
Struck up the dagger in appeal
From stealthy lie to brutal force—
And out upon the traitor's corse
Was yielded the true spirit.

'I would mine hand had fought that fight
And justified my father!
I would mine heart had caught that wound
And slept beside him rather!
I think it were a better thing
Than murdered friend and marriage-ring
Forced on my life together.

'Wail shook Earl Walter's house;
His true wife shed no tear;
She lay upon her bed as mute
As the earl did on his bier:
Till—'Ride, ride fast,' she said at last,
'And bring the avengëd's son anear!
Ride fast, ride free, as a dart can flee,
For white of blee with waiting for me
Is the corse in the next chambère.'

'I came, I knelt beside her bed;
Her calm was worse than strife:
'My husband, for thy father dear,
Gave freely when thou wast not here
His own and eke my life.
A boon! Of that sweet child we make
An orphan for thy father's sake,
Make thou, for ours, a wife.'

'I said, 'My steed neighs in the court,
My bark rocks on the brine,
And the warrior's vow I am under now
To free the pilgrim's shrine;
But fetch the ring and fetch the priest
And call that daughter of thine,
And rule she wide from my castle on Nyde
While I am in Palestine.'

'In the dark chambère, if the bride was fair,
Ye wis, I could not see,
But the steed thrice neighed, and the priest fast prayed,
And wedded fast were we.

Her mother smiled upon her bed
As at its side we knelt to wed,
And the bride rose from her knee
And kissed the smile of her mother dead,
Or ever she kissed me.

'My page, my page, what grieves thee so,
That the tears run down thy face?'—
'Alas, alas! mine own sistér
Was in thy lady's case:
But *she* laid down the silks she wore
And followed him she wed before,
Disguised as his true servitor,
To the very battle-place.'

And wept the page, but laughed the knight,
A careless laugh laughed he:
'Well done it were for thy sistèr,
But not for my ladye!
My love, so please you, shall requite
No woman, whether dark or bright,
Unwomaned if she be.'

The page stopped weeping and smiled cold—
'Your wisdom may declare
That womanhood is proved the best
By golden brooch and glossy vest
The mincing ladies wear;
Yet is it proved, and was of old,
Anear as well, I dare to hold,
By truth, or by despair.'

He smiled no more, he wept no more,
  But passionate he spake—
'Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,
  When none beside did wake!
Oh, womanly she paled in fight,
  For one belovëd's sake!—
And her little hand, defiled with blood
Her tender tears of womanhood
  Most woman-pure did make!'

—'Well done it were for thy sistèr,
  Thou tellest well her tale!
But for my lady, she shall pray
  I' the kirk of Nydesdale.
Not dread for me but love for me
  Shall make my lady pale;
No casque shall hide her woman's tear;
It shall have room to trickle clear
  Behind her woman's veil.'

—'But what if she mistook thy mind
  And followed thee to strife,
Then kneeling did entreat thy love
  As paynims ask for life?'
—'I would forgive, and evermore
Would love her as my servitor,
  But little as my wife.

'Look up—there is a small bright cloud
  Alone amid the skies!
So high, so pure, and so apart,
  A woman's honour lies.'

The page looked up—the cloud was sheen—
A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
Betwixt it and his eyes.

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
From welkin unto hill—
Ha! who rides there?—the page is 'ware,
Though the cry at his heart is still:
And the page seeth all and the knight seeth none,
Though banner and spear do fleck the sun,
And the Saracens ride at will.

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—
'Ride fast, my master, ride,
Or ere within the broadening dark
The narrow shadows hide.'
'Yea, fast, my page, I will do so,
And keep thou at my side.'

'Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,
Thy faithful page precede,
For I must loose on saddle-bow
My battle-casque that galls, I trow,
The shoulder of my steed;
And I must pray, as I did vow,
For one in bitter need.

'Ere night I shall be near to thee,—
Now ride, my master, ride!
Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
To mortals too beloved to leave,
I shall be at thy side.'
The knight smiled free at the fantasy,
And adown the dell did ride.

Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
No smile the word had won;
Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
I ween he had never gone:
Had the knight looked back to the page's geste,
I ween he had turned anon,
For dread was the woe in the face so young,
And wild was the silent geste that flung
Casque, sword to earth, as the boy down-sprung
And stood—alone, alone.

He clenched his hands as if to hold
His soul's great agony—
'Have I renounced my womanhood
For wifehood unto *thee*,
And is this the last, last look of thine
That ever I shall see?

'Yet God thee save, and may'st thou have
A lady to thy mind,
More woman-proud and half as true
As one thou leav'st behind!
And God me take with HIM to dwell—
For HIM I cannot love too well,
As I have loved my kind.'

SHE looketh up, in earth's despair,
The hopeful heavens to seek;
That little cloud still floateth there,
Whereof her loved did speak:
How bright the little cloud appears!
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,
And the tears down either cheek.

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
  The Paynims round her coming!
The sound and sight have made her calm,—
  False page, but truthful woman;
She stands amid them all unmoved:
A heart once broken by the loved
  Is strong to meet the foeman.

'Ho, Christian page! art keeping sheep,
  From pouring wine-cups resting?'—
'I keep my master's noble name,
  For warring not for feasting!
And if that here Sir Hubert were,
My master brave, my master dear,
  Ye would not stay the questing.'

'Where is thy master, scornful page,
  That we may slay or bind him?'—
'Now search the lea and search the wood,
  And see if ye can find him!
Nathless, as hath been often tried,
Your Paynim heroes faster ride
  Before him than behind him.'

'Give smoother answers, lying page,
  Or perish in the lying!'—
'I trow that if the warrior brand
Beside my foot, were in my hand,
  'Twere better at replying!'
They cursed her deep, they smote her low,
They cleft her golden ringlets through;
  The Loving is the Dying

She felt the scimitar gleam down,
And met it from beneath
With smile more bright in victory
Than any sword from sheath,—
Which flashed across her lips serene,
Most like the spirit-light between
The darks of life and death.

Ingemisco, ingemisco!
From the convent on the sea,
Now it sweepeth solemnly,
As over wood and over lea
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,
And the Lady Abbess stark before it,
And the weary nuns with hearts that faintly
Beat along their voices saintly—
Ingemisco, ingemisco!
Dirge for abbess laid in shroud
Sweepeth o'er the shroudless Dead,
Page or lady, as we said,
With the dews upon her head,
All as sad if not as loud.
Ingemisco, ingemisco!
Is ever a lament begun
By any mourner under sun,
Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one?*

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.

To the belfry, one by one, went the ringers from the sun,
Toll slowly.
And the oldest ringer said, 'Ours is music for the Dead
When the rebecks are all done.'

Six abeles i' the churchyard grow on the north side in a row,
Toll slowly.
And the shadows of their tops rock across the little slopes
Of the grassy graves below.

On the south side and the west a small river runs in haste,
Toll slowly.
And, between the river flowing and the fair green trees a-growing,
Do the dead lie at their rest.

On the east I sat that day, up against a willow grey:
Toll slowly.
Through the rain of willow branches I could see the low hill-ranges
And the river on its way.

There I sat beneath the tree, and the bell tolled solemnly,

Toll slowly.

While the trees' and river's voices flowed between the solemn noises,—

Yet death seemed more loud to me.

There I read this ancient Rhyme while the bell did all the time

Toll slowly.

And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life and sin,

Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

THE RHYME.

Broad the forests stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged,

Toll slowly.

And three hundred years had stood mute adown each hoary wood,

Like a full heart having prayed.

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,

Toll slowly.

And but little thought was theirs of the silent antique years,

In the building of their nest.

Down the sun dropt large and red on the towers of Linteged,—

Toll slowly.

Lance and spear upon the height, bristling strange in fiery light,

While the castle stood in shade.

There the castle stood up black with the red sun at its back,

Toll slowly.

Like a sullen smouldering pyre with a top that flickers fire

When the wind is on its track.

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle wall,

Toll slowly.

And the castle, seethed in blood, fourteen days and nights had stood

And to-night was near its fall.

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a bride did come,

Toll slowly.

One who proudly trod the floors and softly whispered in the doors,

'May good angels bless our home.'

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies,

Toll slowly.

Oh, a bride of cordial mouth where the untired smile of youth

Did light outward its own sighs!

'Twas a Duke's fair orphan-girl, and her uncle's ward—the Earl,

Toll slowly.

Who betrothed her twelve years old, for the sake of dowry gold,

To his son Lord Leigh the churl.

But what time she had made good all her years of womanhood,

Toll slowly.

Unto both these Lords of Leigh spake she out right sovranly,

'My will runneth as my blood.

'And while this same blood makes red this same right hand's veins,' she said,

Toll slowly.

''Tis my will as lady free, not to wed a Lord of Leigh,

But Sir Guy of Linteged.'

The old Earl he smilëd smooth, then he sighed for wilful youth,—

Toll slowly.

'Good my niece, that hand withal looketh somewhat soft and small

For so large a will, in sooth.'

She too smiled by that same sign, but her smile was cold and fine,—

Toll slowly.

'Little hand clasps muckle gold, or it were not worth the hold

Of thy son, good uncle mine!'

Then the young lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly in his teeth,

Toll slowly.

'He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him an she loathed,
Let the life come or the death.'

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father's child might rise,—

Toll slowly.

'Thy hound's blood, my Lord of Leigh, stains thy knightly heel,' quoth she,
'And he moans not where he lies:

'But a woman's will dies hard, in the hall or on the sward'—

Toll slowly.

'By that grave, my lords, which made me orphaned girl and dowered lady,
I deny you wife and ward!'

Unto each she bowed her head and swept past with lofty tread.

Toll slowly.

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the chapel had the priest
Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

Fast and fain the bridal train along the night-storm rode amain:

Toll slowly.

Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck their hoofs out on the turf,
In the pauses of the rain.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along the storm pursued amain,

Toll slowly.

Steed on steed-track, dashing off,—thickening, doubling hoof on hoof,

In the pauses of the rain.

And the bridegroom led the flight on his red-roan steed of might,

Toll slowly.

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if she feared no harm,

Smiling out into the night.

'Dost thou fear?' he said at last: 'Nay,' she answered him in haste,—

Toll slowly.

'Not such death as we could find—only life with one behind.

Ride on fast as fear, ride fast!'

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—girth to ground, and fetlocks spread,—

Toll slowly.

Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—down he staggered, down the banks,

To the towers of Linteged.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus tossed about,

Toll slowly.

In the courtyard rose the cry, 'Live the Duchess and Sir Guy!'

But she never heard them shout.

On the steed she dropped her cheek, kissed his mane
and kissed his neck,—
Toll slowly.
'I had happier died by thee than lived on, a Lady Leigh,'
Were the first words she did speak.

But a three months' joyaunce lay 'twixt that moment
and to-day,
Toll slowly.
When five hundred archers tall stand beside the castle
wall
To recapture Duchess May.

And the castle standeth black with the red sun at its
back,
Toll slowly.
And a fortnight's siege is done, and, except the duchess,
none
Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eyes so
grey of blee,
Toll slowly.
And thin lips that scarcely sheath the cold white gnashing
of his teeth,
Gnashed in smiling, absently,

Cried aloud, 'So goes the day, bridegroom fair of
Duchess May!'
Toll slowly.
'Look thy last upon that sun! if thou seest to-morrow's
one
'Twill be through a foot of clay.

'Ha, fair bride! dost hear no sound save that moaning of the hound?'

Toll slowly.

'Thou and I have parted troth, yet I keep my vengeance-oath,
And the other may come round.

'Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past compare,'—

Toll slowly.

'Yet thine old love's faulchion brave is as strong a thing to have,
As the will of lady fair.

'Peck on blindly, netted dove! If a wife's name thee behove,'

Toll slowly.

'Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has hid the sorrow
Of thy last ill-mated love.

'O'er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call back troth;'

Toll slowly.

'He shall altar be and priest,—and he will not cry at least
"I forbid you, I am loth!"

'I will wring thy fingers pale in the gauntlet of my mail,'

Toll slowly.

"Little hand and muckle gold" close shall lie within my hold,
As the sword did, to prevail.'

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,

Toll slowly.

Oh, and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put away
All his boasting, for a jest.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,—

Toll slowly.

'Tower is strong and will is free : thou canst boast, my lord of Leigh,
But thou boastest little wit.

In her tire-glass gazëd she, and she blushed right womanly :

Toll slowly.

She blushed half from her disdain, half, her beauty was so plain,
—'Oath for oath, my lord of Leigh!'

Straight she called her maidens in—'Since ye gave me blame herein,'

Toll slowly.

''That a bridal such as mine should lack gauds to make it fine,
Come and shrive me from that sin.

'It is three months gone to-day since I gave mine hand away :'

Toll slowly.

'Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride-state in them,
While we keep the foe at bay.

'On your arms I loose mine hair; comb it smooth and crown it fair:'

Toll slowly,

'I would look in purple pall from this lattice down the wall,
And throw scorn to one that's there!'

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west:

Toll slowly.

On the tower the castle's lord leant in silence on his sword,
With an anguish in his breast.

With a spirit-laden weight did he lean down passionate:

Toll slowly.

They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter therewithal
With no knocking at the gate.

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered, snapped upon the stone,—

Toll slowly.

'Sword,' he thought, with inward laugh, 'ill thou servest for a staff
When thy nobler use is done!

'Sword, thy nobler use is done! tower is lost, and shame begun!'—

Toll slowly.

'If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech to speech,
We should die there, each for one.

'If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly fall,'

Toll slowly.

But if *I* die here alone,—then I die who am but one,
And die nobly for them all.

'Five true friends lie for my sake in the moat, and in the brake'

Toll slowly.

'Thirteen warriors lie at rest with a black wound in the breast,
And not one of these will wake.

'So no more of this shall be! heart-blood weighs too heavily,'—

Toll slowly.

'And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the brave
Heaped around and over me.

'Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a plighted faith,'

Toll slowly.

'Since my pale young sister's cheeks blush like rose when Ronald speaks,
Albeit never a word she saith—

'These shall never die for me: life-blood falls too heavily:'

Toll slowly.

'And if *I* die here apart, o'er my dead and silent heart
They shall pass out safe and free.

'When the foe hath heard it said—'Death holds Guy of Linteged,''

Toll slowly.

'That new corse new peace shall bring, and a blessëd, blessëd thing
Shall the stone be at its head.

'Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear my memory,'

Toll slowly.

'Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair my widowed bride
Whose sole sin was love of me:

'With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front her and entreat,'

Toll slowly.

'And their purple pall will spread underneath her fainting head
While her tears drop over it.

'She will weep her woman's tears, she will pray her woman's prayers,'

Toll slowly.

'But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will spring again
By the suntime of her years.

Ah, sweet May! ah, sweetest grief!—once I vowed thee my belief,'

Toll slowly.

'That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of poets, in completeness!
Now my May-day seemeth brief.'

All these silent thoughts did swim o'er his eyes grown strange and dim,

Toll slowly.

Till his true men in the place, wished they stood there face to face

With the foe instead of him.

'One last oath, my friends that wear faithful hearts to do and dare!'

Toll slowly.

'Tower must fall and bride be lost—swear me service worth the cost!'

Bold they stood around to swear.

'Each man clasp my hand and swear by the deed we failed in there,'

Toll slowly.

'Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one blow to-night!'

Pale they stood around to swear.

'One last boon, young Ralph and Clare! faithful hearts to do and dare!'

Toll slowly.

'Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed before you all,

Guide him up the turret-stair.

'Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this height;'

Toll slowly.

'Once in love and twice in war, hath he borne me strong and far:

He shall bear me far to-night.'

Then his men looked to and fro, when they heard him speaking so ;

Toll slowly.

''Las ! the noble heart,' they thought, 'he in sooth is grief-distraught :

Would we stood here with the foe !'

But a fire flashed from his eye, 'twixt their thought and their reply,—

Toll slowly.

'Have ye so much time to waste? We who ride, here, must ride fast

As we wish our foes to fly.'

They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness he did wear,

Toll slowly.

Past the court and through the doors, across the rushes of the floors,

But they goad him up the stair.

Then from out her bower chambère, did the Duchess May repair :

Toll slowly.

'Tell me now what is your need,' said the lady, 'of this steed,

That ye goad him up the stair?'

Calm she stood ; unbodkined through, fell her dark hair to her shoe ;

Toll slowly.

And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,

Had not time enough to go.

'Get thee back, sweet Duchess May! hope is gone like yesterday.'

Toll slowly.

'One half-hour completes the breach: and thy lord grows wild of speech—
Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray!

'In the east tower, high'st of all, loud he cries for steed from stall:'

Toll slowly.

'He would ride as far,' quoth he, 'as for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle-wall.'

'And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a hoof did fall'—

Toll slowly.

'Wifely prayer meets deathly need: may the sweet Heavens hear thee plead
If he rides the castle-wall!'

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled on the floor,

Toll slowly.

And tear after tear you heard fall distinct as any word
Which you might be listening for.

'Get thee in, thou soft ladye! here is never a place for thee!'

Toll slowly

'Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty in its moan
May find grace with Leigh of Leigh.'

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet steady face,
Toll slowly.
Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering, seems to look
Right against the thunder-place.

And her foot trod in, with pride, her own tears i' the stone beside,—
Toll slowly.
'Go to, faithful friends, go to! judge no more what ladies do,
No, nor how their lords may ride!'

Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did kiss and stroke:
Toll slowly.
Soft he neighed to answer her, and then followed up the stair
For the love of her sweet look:

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair around,
Toll slowly.
Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step by step beside her treading
Did he follow, meek as hound.

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there, where never a hoof did fall,—
Toll slowly.
Out they swept, a vision steady, noble steed and lovely lady,
Calm as if in bower or stall.

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up
silently,
Toll slowly.
And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within
her eyes
Which he could not bear to see.

Quoth he, 'Get thee from this strife, and the sweet saints
bless thy life!'
Toll slowly.
'In this hour I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed,
But no more of my noble wife.'

Quoth she, 'Meekly have I done all thy biddings under
sun;'
Toll slowly.
'But by all my womanhood, which is proved so, true
and good,
I will never do this one.

'Now by womanhood's degree and by wifehood's verity,'
Toll slowly.
'In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan
steed,
Thou hast also need of *me.*

By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand pardiè,'
Toll slowly.
'If this hour, on castle-wall can be room for steed from
stall,
Shall be also room for *me.*

'So the sweet saints with me be,' (did she utter solemnly,)
Toll slowly.
'If a man, this eventide, on this castle wall will ride,
He shall ride the same with *me.*'

Oh, he sprang up in the selle and he laughed out bitterwell,—
Toll slowly.
'Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on other eves,
To hear chime a vesper-bell?'

She clung closer to his knee—'Ay, beneath the cypress tree!'
Toll slowly.
'Mock me not, for otherwhere than along the greenwood fair
Have I ridden fast with thee.

'Fast I rode with new-made vows from my angry kinsman's house:'
Toll slowly.
'What, and would you men should reck that I dared more for love's sake
As a bride than as a spouse?

'What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb, be fore all,'
Toll slowly.
'That a bride may keep your side while through castle-gate you ride,
Yet eschew the castle-wall?'

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin and roars up against her suing,
Toll slowly.
With the inarticulate din and the dreadful falling in—
Shrieks of doing and undoing.

Twice he wrung her hands in twain, but the small hands closed again.
Toll slowly.
Back he reined the steed—back, back! but she trailed along his track
With a frantic clasp and strain.

Evermore the foemen pour through the crash of window and door,
Toll slowly.
And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of 'kill!' and 'flee!'
Strike up clear amid the roar.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain, but they closed and clung again,
Toll slowly.
While she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon the rood,
In a spasm of deathly pain.

She clung wild and she clung mute with her shuddering lips half-shut;
Toll slowly.
Her head fallen as half in swound, hair and knee swept on the ground,
She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

Back he reined his steed back-thrown on the slippery
coping-stone;
Toll slowly.
Back the iron hoofs did grind on the battlement behind
Whence a hundred feet went down:

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank
bestrode,—
Toll slowly.
'Friends and brothers, save my wife! Pardon, Sweet, in
change for life,—
But I ride alone to God.'

Straight as if the holy name had upbreathed her like a
flame,
Toll slowly.
She upsprang, she rose upright, in his selle she sat in
sight,
By her love she overcame.

And her head was on his breast where she smiled as one
at rest,—
Toll slowly.
'Ring,' she cried, 'O vesper-bell in the beechwood's old
chapelle—
But the passing-bell rings best!'

They have caught out at the rein which Sir Guy threw
loose—in vain,
Toll slowly.
For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs poised
in air,
On the last verge rears amain.

Now he hangs, he rocks between, and his nostrils curdle in,

Toll slowly.

Now he shivers head and hoof, and the flakes of foam fall off,

And his face grows fierce and thin :

And a look of human woe from his staring eyes did go,

Toll slowly.

And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony

Of the headlong death below,—

And, 'Ring, ring, thou passing bell,' still she cried, 'i' the old chapelle !'

Toll slowly.

Then back-toppling, crashing back—a dead weight flung out to wrack,

Horse and riders overfell.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,

Toll slowly.

And I read this ancient Rhyme, in the churchyard, while the chime

Slowly tolled for one at rest.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did run,

Toll slowly.

And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion and its change,

Here, where all done lay undone.

And beneath a willow tree I a little grave did see,
Toll slowly.
Where was graved,—HERE, UNDEFILED, LIETH MAUD, A THREE-YEAR CHILD,
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED, FORTY-THREE.

Then, O spirits, did I say, ye who rode so fast that day,
Toll slowly.
Did star-wheels and angel wings with their holy winnowings
Keep beside you all the way?

Though in passion ye would dash with a blind and heavy crash,
Toll slowly.
Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment in the field,—
Though your heart and brain were rash,—

Now, your will is all unwilled, now, your pulses are all stilled,
Toll slowly.
Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud the child,
Whose small grave was lately filled.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient now,
Toll slowly.
And the children might be bold to pluck the kingcups from your mould
Ere a month had let them grow.

And you let the goldfinch sing in the alder near in spring,

Toll slowly.

Let her build her nest and sit all the three weeks out on it,

Murmuring not at anything.

In your patience ye are strong, cold and heat ye take not wrong,

Toll slowly.

When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,

Time will seem to you not long.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,

Toll slowly.

And I said in underbreath,—All our life is mixed with death,

And who knoweth which is best?

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,

Toll slowly.

And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our incompleteness,—

Round our restlessness, His rest.

BERTHA IN THE LANE.

Put the broidery-frame away,
For my sewing is all done :
The last thread is used to-day,
And I need not join it on.
Though the clock stands at the noon
I am weary. I have sewn,
Sweet, for thee, a wedding gown.

Sister, help me to the bed,
And stand near me, Dearest-sweet.
Do not shrink nor be afraid,
Blushing with a sudden heat!
No one standeth in the street?—
By God's love I go to meet,
Love I thee with love complete.

Lean thy face down; drop it in
These two hands, that I may hold
Twixt their palms thy cheek and chin,
Stroking back the curls of gold :
Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth—
Larger eyes and redder mouth
Than mine were in my first youth.

Thou art younger by seven years:
Ah!—so bashful at my gaze,
That the lashes, hung with tears,
Grow too heavy to upraise?
I would wound thee by no touch
Which thy shyness feels as such.
Dost thou mind me, Dear, so much?

Have I not been nigh a mother
To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear?
Have we not loved one another
Tenderly, from year to year,
Since our dying mother mild
Said with accents undefiled,
'Child, be mother to this child!'

Mother, mother, up in heaven,
Stand up on the jasper sea,
And be witness I have given
All the gifts required of me,—
Hope that blessed me, bliss that crowned,
Love that left me with a wound,
Life itself that turneth round!

Mother, mother, thou art kind,
Thou art standing in the room,
In a molten glory shrined
That rays off into the gloom!
But thy smile is bright and bleak
Like cold waves—I cannot speak,
I sob in it, and grow weak.

Ghostly mother, keep aloof
One hour longer from my soul,
For I still am thinking of
Earth's warm-beating joy and dole!
On my finger is a ring
Which I still see glittering
When the night hides everything.

Little sister, thou art pale!
Ah, I have a wandering brain—
But I lose that fever-bale,
And my thoughts grow calm again.
Lean down closer—closer still!
I have words thine ear to fill,
And would kiss thee at my will.

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,
Thee and Robert—through the trees,—
When we all went gathering
Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.
Do not start so! think instead
How the sunshine overhead
Seemed to trickle through the shade.

What a day it was, that day!
Hills and vales did openly
Seem to heave and throb away
At the sight of the great sky:
And the silence, as it stood
In the glory's golden flood,
Audibly did bud, and bud.

Through the winding hedgerows green,
How we wandered, I and you,
With the bowery tops shut in,
And the gates that showed the view!
How we talked there! thrushes soft
Sang our praises out, or oft
Bleatings took them, from the croft:

Till the pleasure grown too strong
Left me muter evermore,
And, the winding road being long,
I walked out of sight, before,
And so, wrapt in musings fond,
Issued (past the wayside pond)
On the meadow-lands beyond.

I sat down beneath the beech
Which leans over to the lane,
And the far sound of your speech
Did not promise any pain;
And I blessed you full and free,
With a smile stooped tenderly
O'er the May-flowers on my knee.

But the sound grew into word
As the speakers drew more near—
Sweet, forgive me that I heard
What you wished me not to hear.
Do not weep so, do not shake,
Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make
Good true answers for my sake.

Yes, and HE too ! let him stand
  In thy thoughts untouched by blame.
Could he help it, if my hand
  He had claimed with hasty claim ?
That was wrong perhaps—but then
Such things be—and will, again.
Women cannot judge for men.

Had he seen thee when he swore
  He would love but me alone ?
Thou wast absent, sent before
  To our kin in Sidmouth town.
When he saw thee who art best
Past compare, and loveliest,
He but judged thee as the rest.

Could we blame him with grave words,
  Thou and I, Dear, if we might ?
Thy brown eyes have looks like birds
  Flying straightway to the light :
Mine are older.—Hush !—look out—
Up the street ! Is none without ?
How the poplar swings about !

And that hour—beneath the beech,
  When I listened in a dream,
And he said in his deep speech
  That he owed me all *esteem*,—
Each word swam in on my brain
With a dim, dilating pain,
Till it burst with that last strain.

I fell flooded with a dark,
In the silence of a swoon.
When I rose, still cold and stark,
There was night; I saw the moon:
And the stars, each in its place,
And the May-blooms on the grass,
Seemed to wonder what I was.

And I walked as if apart
From myself, when I could stand,
And I pitied my own heart,
As if I held it in my hand,
Somewhat coldly, with a sense
Of fulfilled benevolence,
And a 'Poor thing' negligence.

And I answered coldly too,
When you met me at the door;
And I only *heard* the dew
Dripping from me to the floor:
And the flowers I bade you see,
Were too withered for the bee,—
As my life, henceforth, for me.

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm!
All was best as it befell.
If I say he did me harm,
I speak wild,—I am not well.
All his words were kind and good—
He esteemed me. Only, blood
Runs so faint in womanhood!

Then I always was too grave,—
  Liked the saddest ballad sung,—
With that look, besides, we have
  In our faces, who die young.
I had died, Dear, all the same;
Life's long, joyous, jostling game
Is too loud for my meek shame.

We are so unlike each other,
  Thou and I, that none could guess
We were children of one mother,
  But for mutual tenderness.
Thou art rose-lined from the cold,
And meant verily to hold
Life's pure pleasures manifold.

I am pale as crocus grows
  Close behind a rose-tree's root;
Whosoe'er would reach the rose,
  Treads the crocus underfoot.
I, like May-bloom on thorn-tree,
Thou, like merry summer-bee,—
Fit that I be plucked for thee!

Yet who plucks me?—no one mourns,
  I have lived my season out,
And now die of my own thorns
  Which I could not live without.
Sweet, be merry! How the light
Comes and goes! If it be night,
Keep the candles in my sight.

Are there footsteps at the door?
Look out quickly. Yea, or nay?
Some one might be waiting for
Some last word that I might say.
Nay? So best!—so angels would
Stand off clear from deathly road,
Not to cross the sight of God.

Colder grow my hands and feet.
When I wear the shroud I made,
Let the folds lie straight and neat,
And the rosemary be spread,
That if any friend should come,
(To see *thee*, Sweet!) all the room
May be lifted out of gloom.

And, dear Bertha, let me keep
On my hand this little ring,
Which at nights, when others sleep,
I can still see glittering.
Let me wear it out of sight,
In the grave,—where it will light
All the dark up, day and night.

On that grave drop not a tear!
Else, though fathom-deep the place,
Through the woollen shroud I wear
I shall feel it on my face.
Rather smile there, blessëd one,
Thinking of me in the sun,
Or forget me—smiling on!

Art thou near me? nearer! so—
  Kiss me close upon the eyes,
That the earthly light may go
  Sweetly, as it used to rise
When I watched the morning-grey
Strike, betwixt the hills, the way
He was sure to come that day.

So,—no more vain words be said!
  The hosannas nearer roll.
Mother, smile now on thy Dead,
  I am death-strong in my soul.
Mystic Dove alit on cross,
Guide the poor bird of the snows
Through the snow-wind above loss!

Jesus, Victim, comprehending
  Love's divine self-abnegation,
Cleanse my love in its self-spending,
  And absorb the poor libation!
Wind my thread of life up higher.
Up, through angels' hands of fire!
I aspire while I expire.

CATARINA TO CAMOENS;

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND REFERRING TO THE POEM IN WHICH HE RECORDED THE SWEETNESS OF HER EYES

On the door you will not enter,
I have gazed too long: adieu!
Hope withdraws her peradventure;
Death is near me,—and not *you*.
Come, O lover,
Close and cover
These poor eyes, you called, I ween,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

When I heard you sing that burden
In my vernal days and bowers,
Other praises disregarding,
I but harkened that of yours—
Only saying
In heart-playing,
'Blessed eyes mine eyes have been
If the sweetest, HIS have seen!'

But all changes. At this vesper,
Cold the sun shines down the door.
If you stood there, would you whisper
'Love, I love you,' as before,—

Death pervading
Now, and shading
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
As the sweetest ever seen?

Yes. I think, were you beside them,
Near the bed I die upon,
Though their beauty you denied them,
As you stood there, looking down,
You would truly
Call them duly,
For the love's sake found therein,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

And if *you* looked down upon them,
And if *they* looked up to *you*,
All the light which has foregone them
Would be gathered back anew:
They would truly
Be as duly
Love-transformed to beauty's sheen,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

But, ah me! you only see me,
In your thoughts of loving man,
Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy
Through the wavings of my fan;
And unweeting
Go repeating,
In your reverie serene,
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen—'

While my spirit leans and reaches
From my body still and pale,
Fain to hear what tender speech is
In your love to help my bale.
O my poet,
Come and show it!
Come, of latest love, to glean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

O my poet, O my prophet,
When you praised their sweetness so,
Did you think, in singing of it,
That it might be near to go?
Had you fancies
From their glances,
That the grave would quickly screen
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

No reply. The fountain's warble
In the courtyard sounds alone.
As the water to the marble
So my heart falls with a moan
From love-sighing
To this dying.
Death forerunneth Love to win
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

Will you come? When I'm departed
Where all sweetnesses are hid,
Where thy voice, my tender-hearted,
Will not lift up either lid;

Cry, O lover,
Love is over!
Cry, beneath the cypress green,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

When the angelus is ringing,
Near the convent will you walk,
And recall the choral singing
Which brought angels down our talk?
Spirit-shriven
I viewed Heaven,
Till you smiled—'Is earth unclean,
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

When beneath the palace-lattice
You ride slow as you have done,
And you see a face there, that is
Not the old familiar one,—
Will you oftly
Murmur softly,
'Here ye watched me morn and e'en,
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

When the palace-ladies, sitting
Round your gittern, shall have said,
'Poet, sing those verses written
For the lady who is dead,'
Will you tremble
Yet dissemble,—
Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

'Sweetest eyes!' how sweet in flowings
The repeated cadence is!
Though you sang a hundred poems,
Still the best one would be this.
I can hear it
'Twixt my spirit
And the earth-noise intervene—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

But the priest waits for the praying,
And the choir are on their knees,
And the soul must pass away in
Strains more solemn-high than these.
Miserere
For the weary!
Oh, no longer for Catrine
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

Keep my riband, take and keep it,
(I have loosed it from my hair,)*
Feeling, while you overweep it,
Not alone in your despair,
Since with saintly
Watch unfaintly
Out of heaven shall o'er you lean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

But—but *now*—yet unremovëd
Up to heaven, they glisten fast;
You may cast away, Belovëd,
In your future all my past:

* She left him the riband from her hair.

Such old phrases
May be praises
For some fairer bosom-queen—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing?
Faithless, faithless,—praised amiss
If a tear be of your showing,
Dropt for any hope of HIS!
Death has boldness
Beside coldness,
If unworthy tears demean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

I will look out to his future;
I will bless it till it shine.
Should he ever be a suitor
Unto sweeter eyes than mine.
Sunshine gild them,
Angels shield them,
Whatsoever eyes terrene
Be the sweetest HIS have seen!

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.

A poet writes to his friend. PLACE—*A room in Wycombe Hall.* TIME—*Late in the evening.*

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my spirit o'er you!
Down the purple of this chamber tears should scarcely run at will.
I am humbled who was humble. Friend, I bow my head before you:
You should lead me to my peasants, but their faces are too still.

There's a lady, an earl's daughter,—she is proud and she is noble,
And she treads the crimson carpet and she breathes the perfumed air,
And a kingly blood sends glances up, her princely eye to trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened in her hair.

She has halls among the woodlands, she has castles by the breakers,
She has farms and she has manors, she can threaten and command,

And the palpitating engines snort in steam across her acres,
As they mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of the land.

There are none of England's daughters who can show a prouder presence :
Upon princely suitors praying, she has looked in her disdain.
She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English peasants ;
What was *I* that I should love her, save for competence to pain ?

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her casement,
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other things.
Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my abasement,
In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in wings !

Many vassals bow before her as her carriage sweeps their doorways ;
She has blest their little children, as a priest or queen were she :
Far too tender, or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor was,
For I thought it was the same smile which she used to smile on *me.*

She has voters in the commons, she has lovers in the palace,
And of all the fair court ladies, few have jewels half as fine;
Oft the prince has named her beauty 'twixt the red wine and the chalice:
Oh, and what was *I* to love her? my beloved, my Geraldine!

Yet I could not choose but love her: I was born to poet-uses,
To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair.
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont to call the Muses;
And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount to star.

And because I was a poet, and because the public praised me,
With a critical deduction for the modern writer's fault,
I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies that raised me,
Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of the salt.

And they praised me in her presence;—'Will your book appear this summer?'
Then returning to each other—'Yes, our plans are for the moors.'

Then with whisper dropped behind me—'There he is!
the latest comer.
Oh, she only likes his verses! what is over, she
endures.

'Quite low-born, self-educated! somewhat gifted though
by nature,
And we make a point of asking him,—of being very
kind.
You may speak, he does not hear you! and besides, he
writes no satire,—
All these serpents kept by charmers leave the natural
sting behind.'

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there
among them,
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning
scorched my brow;
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, over-
rung them,
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature
through.

I looked upward and beheld her: with a calm and reg-
nant spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before
them all—
Have you such superfluous honour, sir, that able to
confer it
You will come down, Mister Bertram, as my guest to
Wycombe Hall?'

Here she paused; she had been paler at the first word of
her speaking,
But because a silence followed it, blushed somewhat, as
for shame,
Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—'I
am seeking
More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of
my claim.

'Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a
woman,'
(Here her smile sprang like a fountain and, so, over-
flowed her mouth,)
'But because my woods in Sussex have some purple
shades at gloaming
Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his
youth.

'I invite you, Mister Bertram, to no scene for worldly
speeches—
Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked the
thrushes first:
And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my
beeches,
I will thank you for the woodlands,—for the human
world, at worst.'

Then she smiled around right childly, then she gazed
around right queenly,
And I bowed—I could not answer; alternated light and
gloom—

While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye serenely,
She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from the room.

Oh, the blessed woods of Sussex! I can hear them still around me,
With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the wind.
Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex! where the hunter's arrow found me,
When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad and blind!

In that ancient hall of Wycombe thronged the numerous guests invited,
And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding feet;
And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, softly freighted
All the air about the windows with elastic laughters sweet.

For at eve the open windows flung their light out on the terrace
Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual shadow sweep,
While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the heiress,
Trembled downward through their snowy wings at music in their sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and
singing,
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the
dark;
But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight-
ringing,
And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of
the park.

And though sometimes she would bind me with her
silver-corded speeches
To commix my words and laughter with the converse and
the jest,
Oft I sat apart and, gazing on the river through the
beeches,
Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice
o'erfloat the rest.

In the morning horn of huntsman, hoof of steed and
laugh of rider,
Spread out cheery from the court-yard till we lost them
in the hills,
While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left beside
her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens through the laurels and
abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass, bareheaded,
with the flowing
Of the virginal white vesture gathered closely to her
throat,

And the golden ringlets in her neck just quickened by
her going,
And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if to
float,—

With a branch of dewy maple, which her right hand held
above her,
And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and
the skies,
As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to
love her,
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her
eyes.

For her eyes alone smile constantly; her lips have
serious sweetness,
And her front is calm, the dimple rarely ripples on the
cheek;
But her deep blue eyes smile constantly, as if they in
discreetness
Kept the secret of a happy dream she did not care to
speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the
garden,
And I walked among her noble friends and could not
keep behind.
Spake she unto all and unto me—'Behold, I am the
warden
Of the song-birds in these lindens, which are cages to
their mind.

'But within this swarded circle into which the lime-walk brings us,
Whence the beeches, rounded greenly, stand away in reverent fear,
I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings us
Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure enough to hear.

'The live air that waves the lilies waves the slender jet of water
Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting saint:
Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping, (Lough the sculptor wrought her,)
So asleep she is forgetting to say Hush!—a fancy quaint.

'Mark how heavy white her eyelids! not a dream between them lingers;
And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon the cheek:
While the right hand,—with the symbol-rose held slack within the fingers,—
Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this Silence will not speak!

'That the essential meaning growing may exceed the special symbol,
Is the thought as I conceive it: it applies more high and low.

Our true noblemen will often through right nobleness grow humble,
And assert an inward honour by denying outward show.'

'Nay, your Silence,' said I, 'truly, holds her symbol-rose but slackly,
Yet *she holds it*, or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken:
And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk blackly
In the presence of the social law as mere ignoble men.

'Let the poets dream such dreaming! madam, in these British islands
'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the symbol that exceeds.
Soon we shall have nought but symbol: and, for statues like this Silence,
Shall accept the rose's image—in another case, the weed's.'

'Not so quickly,' she retorted,—'I confess, where'er you go, you
Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure gold for honour clear:
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw you
The world's book which now reads drily, and sit down with Silence here.'

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in indignation;
Friends who listened, laughed her words off, while her lovers deemed her fair:
A fair woman, flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted station
Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in sunny air!

With the trees round, not so distant but you heard their vernal murmur,
And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and outward move,
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be warmer,
Then recoiling in a tremble from the too much light above.

'Tis a picture for remembrance. And thus, morning after morning,
Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to her feet.
Why, her greyhound followed also! dogs—we both were dogs for scorning—
To be sent back when she pleased it and her path lay through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows and spite of sorrow,
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed along,

Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns
to-morrow,
Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan in a
song

Ay, for sometimes on the hill-side, while we sat down in
the gowans,
With the forest green behind us and its shadows cast
before,
And the river running under, and across it from the
rowans
A brown partridge whirring near us till we felt the air it
bore,—

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the
poems
Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various of
our own ;
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser, or the subtle inter-
flowings
Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book, the leaf is
folded down !—

Or at times a modern volume, Wordsworth's solemn-
thoughted idyl,
Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—
Or from Browning some 'Pomegranate,' which, if cut
deep down the middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined
humanity.

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of my
making :
Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their
worth,
For the echo in you breaks upon the words which you
are speaking,
And the chariot wheels jar in the gate through which you
drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence
round us flinging
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at
the breast,
She would break out on a sudden in a gush of woodland
singing,
Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of
rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing ! scarce I know which is
divinest,
For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on
the tune,
And her mouth stirs with the song, like song ; and when
the notes are finest,
'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem to swell
them on.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked ! her voice, so
cadenced in the talking,
Made another singing—of the soul ! a music without
bars :

While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round
where we were walking,
Brought interposition worthy-sweet, as skies about the
stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she
always thought them;
She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on
branch,
Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought
them
In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the
grange.

In her utmost lightness there is truth—and often she
speaks lightly,
Has a grace in being gay which even mournful souls
approve,
For the root of some grave earnest thought is understruck
so rightly
As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

And she talked on—*we* talked, rather! upon all things,
substance, shadow,
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses, of the reapers in
the corn,
Of the little children from the schools, seen winding
through the meadow,
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by
its scorn.

So, of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher stature,
And the only men that speak aloud for future times to hear;
So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into nature,
Yet will lift the cry of 'progress,' as it trod from sphere to sphere.

And her custom was to praise me when I said,—'The Age culls simples,
With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the glory of the stars.
We are gods by our own reck'ning, and may well shut up the temples,
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of our cars.

'For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
With, at every mile run faster,—'O the wondrous, wondrous age!'
Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our iron,
Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage.

Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's deep resources
But the child's most gradual learning to walk upright without bane?

When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestical white horses,
Are we greater than the first men, who led black ones by the mane?

'If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in rising,
If we wrapped the globe intently with one hot electric breath,
'Twere but power within our tether, no new spirit-power comprising,
And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in death.'

She was patient with my talking; and I loved her, loved her, certes
As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands;
As I loved pure inspirations, loved the graces, loved the virtues,
In a Love content with writing his own name on desert sands.

Or at least I thought so, purely; thought no idiot Hope was raising
Any crown to crown Love's silence, silent Love that sat alone:
Out, alas! the stag is like me, he that tries to go on grazing
With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels with sudden moan.

It was thus I reeled. I told you that her hand had many suitors;
But she smiles them down imperially as Venus did the waves,
And with such a gracious coldness that they cannot press their futures
On the present of her courtesy, which yieldingly enslaves.

And this morning as I sat alone within the inner chamber
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant thought serene,
For I had been reading Camöens, that poem you remember,
Which his lady's eyes are praised in as the sweetest ever seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it, taking from it
A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,
As the branch of a green osier, when a child would overcome it,
Springs up freely from his clasping and goes swinging in the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur; it grew deep as it grew longer,
Speakers using earnest language—'Lady Geraldine, you *would!*'
And I heard a voice that pleaded, ever on in accents stronger,
As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric good.

Well I knew that voice; it was an earl's, of soul that matched his station,
Soul completed into lordship, might and right read on his brow;
Very finely courteous; far too proud to doubt his domination
Of the common people, he atones for grandeur by a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes of less expression
Than resistance, coldly casting off the looks of other men,
As steel, arrows; unelastic lips which seem to taste possession
And be cautious lest the common air should injure or distrain.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing by his order
With a bearing not ungraceful; fond of art and letters too;
Just a good man made a proud man,—as the sandy rocks that border
A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and flow.

Thus, I knew that voice, I heard it, and I could not help the harkening:
In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart within

Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses till they ran on all
sides darkening,
And scorched, weighed like melted metal round my feet
that stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake, for
wealth, position,
For the sake of liberal uses and great actions to be
done—
And she interrupted gently, 'Nay, my lord, the old
tradition
Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is,
should be won.'

'Ah, that white hand!' he said quickly,—and in his he
either drew it
Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she replied,
'Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best
eschew it
And pass on, like friends, to other points less easy to
decide.'

What he said again, I know not: it is likely that his
trouble
Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in
slow scorn,
'And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall
be noble,
Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he
was born.'

There, I maddened! her words stung me. Life swept
through me into fever,
And my soul sprang up astonished, sprang full-statured in
an hour.
Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic
NEVER,
To a Pythian height dilates you, and despair sublimes to
power?

From my brain the soul-wings budded, waved a flame
about my body,
Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-drawn
out, as man,
From amalgamate false natures, and I saw the skies grow
ruddy
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what
spirits can.

I was mad, inspired — say either! (anguish worketh
inspiration)
Was a man or beast—perhaps so, for the tiger roars when
speared;
And I walked on, step by step along the level of my
passion—
Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and
never feared.

He had left her, peradventure, when my footstep proved
my coming,
But for *her*—she half arose, then sat, grew scarlet and
grew pale.

Oh, she trembled! 'tis so always with a worldly man or woman
In the presence of true spirits; what else *can* they do but quail?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest-brothers
Far too strong for it; then, drooping, bowed her face upon her hands;
And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and others:
I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted though leaf-verdant,
Trod them down with words of shaming,—all the purple and the gold,
All the 'landed stakes' and lordships, all that spirits pure and ardent
Are cast out of love and honour because chancing not to hold.

'For myself I do not argue,' said I, 'though I love you, madam,
But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours have trod:
And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels to Adam
Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

'Yet, O God,' I said, 'O grave,' I said, 'O mother's
heart and bosom,
With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and
little child!
We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of
heart-closing;
We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies
defiled.

'Learn more reverence, madam, not for rank or wealth—
that needs no learning,
That comes quickly, quick as sin does, ay, and culminates
to sin;
But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me, 'tis a clay above
your scorning,
With God's image stamped upon it, and God's kindling
breath within.

'What right have you, madam, gazing in your palace-
mirror daily,
Getting so by heart your beauty which all others must
adore,
While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers, to
vow gaily
You will wed no man that's only good to God, and
nothing more?

'Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God,
the sweetest woman
Of all women He has fashioned, with your lovely spirit-
face

Which would seem too near to vanish if its smile were not so human,
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words to grace,

'What right *can* you have, God's other works to scorn, despise, revile them
In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men, forsooth,—
As mere Parias of the outer world, forbidden to assoil them
In the hope of living, dying, near that sweetness of your mouth?

'Have you any answer, madam? If my spirit were less earthly,
If its instrument were gifted with a better silver string,
I would kneel down where I stand, and say—Behold me! I am worthy
Of thy loving, for I love thee. I am worthy as a king.

'As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this stain upon her,
That *I*, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me and you again,
Love you, madam, dare to love you, to my grief and your dishonour,
To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain!'

More mad words like these—mere madness! friend, I need not write them fuller,
For I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers of tears.

'A woman. Imene, a woman! why, a heart had scarce
been duller
Than your brutal loud complaints against the shining of
the spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating
with thunder
Which my word had used. The silence drew her face up
like a call.
Could you guess what word she uttered? She looked up,
as if in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said—'Bertram?' it
was all.

If she had cursed me, and she might have, or if even
with queenly bearing
Which at need is used by women, she had risen up and
said,
'Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have given you a
full hearing:
Now, beseech you, choose a name sounding somewhat
less, instead?—

I had borne it: but that 'Bertram'—why, it lies there on
the paper
A mere word, without her accent, and you cannot judge
the weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion: I seemed
drowning in a vapour;
And her gentleness destroyed me whom her scorn made
desolate.

So, struck backward and exhausted by that inward flow
of passion
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing, into forms of
abstract truth,
By a logic agonising through unseemly demonstration,
And by youth's own anguish turning grimly grey the
hairs of youth,—

By the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake
wisely
I spake basely—using truth, if what I spake indeed was
true,
To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sat there
weighing nicely
A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as I
could do !—

By such wrong and woe exhausted—what I suffered and
occasioned,—
As a wild horse through the city runs with lightning in his
eyes,
And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall,
impassioned,
Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly
drops and dies—

So I fell, struck down before her—do you blame me,
friend, for weakness ?
'Twas my strength of passion slew me !—fell before her
like a stone ;
Fast the dreadful world rolled from me on its roaring
wheels of blackness :
When the light came I was lying in this chamber and alone.

Oh, of course she charged her lacqueys to bear out the sickly burden,
And to cast it from her scornful sight, but not *beyond* the gate ;
She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to pardon
Such a man as I ; 'twere something to be level to her hate.

But for me—you are conscious why, my friend, I write this letter,
How my life is read all backward, and the charm of life undone.
I shall leave her house at dawn ; I would to-night, if I were better—
And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for the sun.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart, with no last gazes,
No weak moanings, (one word only, left in writing for her hands,)
Out of reach of all derision, and some unavailing praises,
To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign lands.

Blame me not. I would not squander life in grief—I am abstemious.
I but nurse my spirit's falcon that its wing may soar again.
There's no room for tears of weakness in the blind eyes of a Phemius :
Into work the poet kneads them, and he does not die *till then.*

CONCLUSION.

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence ever
Still in hot and heavy splashes fell the tears on every leaf.
Having ended he leans backward in his chair, with lips that quiver
From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten thoughts of grief.

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'Tis a dream—a dream of mercies!
'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains how she standeth still and pale!
'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self curses,
Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the tossing of his wail.

'Eyes,' he said, 'now throbbing through me! are ye eyes that did undo me?
Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone!
Underneath that calm white forehead are ye ever burning torrid
O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone?'

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air the purple curtain
Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale brows,

While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for ever
Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's slant repose.

Said he—'Vision of a lady! stand there silent, stand there steady!
Now I see it plainly, plainly, now I cannot hope or doubt—
There, the brows of mild repression—there, the lips of silent passion,
Curvëd like an archer's bow to send the bitter arrows out.'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding measured pace;
With her two white hands extended as if praying one offended,
And a look of supplication gazing earnest in his face.

Said he—'Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath, or stir of vesture!
Let the blessëd apparition melt not yet to its divine!
No approaching—hush, no breathing! or my heart must swoon to death in
The too utter life thou bringest, O thou dream of Geraldine!'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes and tenderly:—

'Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no woman far above me
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart than such a one as *I*?'

Said he—'I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that river,
Flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward to the sea!
So, thou vision of all sweetness, princely to a full completeness
Would my heart and life flow onward, deathward, through this dream of THEE!'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,
While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of her cheeks;
Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she softly told him,
'Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis the vision only speaks.'

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell before her,
And she whispered low in triumph, 'It shall be as I have sworn.
Very rich he is in virtues, very noble—noble, certes;
And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him lowly born.'

LORD WALTER'S WIFE.

'But why do you go,' said the lady, while both sat under the yew,
And her eyes were alive in their depth, as the kraken beneath the sea-blue.

'Because I fear you,' he answered;—'because you are far too fair,
And able to strangle my soul in a mesh of your gold-coloured hair.'

'Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason! Such knots are quickly undone,
And too much beauty, I reckon, is nothing but too much sun.'

'Yet farewell so,' he answered;—'the sun-stroke 's fatal at times.
I value your husband, Lord Walter, whose gallop rings still from the limes.'

'Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason. You smell a rose through a fence:
If two should smell it, what matters? who grumbles, and where's the pretence?'

'But I,' he replied, 'have promised another, when love was free,
To love her alone, alone, who alone and afar loves me.'

'Why, that,' she said, 'is no reason. Love 's always free,
I am told.
Will you vow to be safe from the headache on Tuesday,
and think it will hold?'

'But you,' he replied, 'have a daughter, a young little
child, who was laid
In your lap to be pure; so, I leave you: the angels would
make me afraid.'

'Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason. The angels keep out
of the way;
And Dora, the child, observes nothing, although you
should please me and stay.'

At which he rose up in his anger,—'Why, now, you no
longer are fair!
Why, now, you no longer are fatal, but ugly and hateful,
I swear.'

At which she laughed out in her scorn.—'These men!
Oh, these men overnice,
Who are shocked if a colour, not virtuous, is frankly put
on by a vice.'

Her eyes blazed upon him—'And *you!* You bring us
your vices so near
That we smell them! You think in our presence a
thought 'twould defame us to hear!

'What reason had you, and what right,—I appeal to your
soul from my life,—
To find me too fair as a woman? Why, sir, I am pure,
and a wife.

'Is the day-star too fair up above you? It burns you not. Dare you imply
I brushed you more close than the star does, when Walter had set me as high?

'If a man finds a woman too fair, he means simply adapted too much
To uses unlawful and fatal. The praise!—shall I thank you for such?

'Too fair?—not unless you misuse us! and surely if, once in a while,
You attain to it, straightway you call us no longer too fair, but too vile.

'A moment, I pray your attention!—I have a poor word in my head
I must utter, though womanly custom would set it down better unsaid.

'You grew, sir, pale to impertinence, once when I showed you a ring.
You kissed my fan when I dropped it. No matter!—I've broken the thing

'You did me the honour, perhaps, to be moved at my side now and then
In the senses—a vice, I have heard, which is common to beasts and some men.

'Love 's a virtue for heroes!—as white as the snow on high hills,
And immortal as every great soul is that struggles, endures, and fulfils.

'I love my Walter profoundly,—you, Maude, though you faltered a week,
For the sake of . . what was it? an eyebrow? or, less still, a mole on a cheek?

'And since, when all 's said, you 're too noble to stoop to the frivolous cant
About crimes irresistible, virtues that swindle, betray and supplant,

'I determined to prove to yourself that, whate'er you might dream or avow
By illusion, you wanted precisely no more of me than you have now.

'There! look me full in the face!—in the face. Understand, if you can,
That the eyes of such women as I am, are clean as the palm of a man.

'Drop his hand, you insult him. Avoid us for fear we should cost you a scar—
You take us for harlots, I tell you, and not for the women we are.

'You wronged me: but then I considered . . . there's Walter! And so at the end,
I vowed that he should not be mulcted, by me, in the hand of a friend.

'Have I hurt you indeed? We are quits then. Nay, friend of my Walter, be mine!
Come Dora, my darling, my angel, and help me to ask him to dine.'

BIANCA AMONG THE NIGHTINGALES.

THE cypress stood up like a church
That night we felt our love would hold,
And saintly moonlight seemed to search
And wash the whole world clean as gold;
The olives crystallized the vales'
Broad slopes until the hills grew strong:
The fireflies and the nightingales
Throbbed each to either, flame and song.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

Upon the angle of its shade
The cypress stood, self-balanced high;
Half up, half down, as double made,
Along the ground, against the sky.
And *we* too! from such soul-height went
Such leaps of blood, so blindly driven,
We scarce knew if our nature meant
Most passionate earth or intense heaven.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

We paled with love, we shook with love,
We kissed so close we could not vow;
Till Giulio whispered, 'Sweet, above
God's Ever guarantees this Now.'

And through his words the nightingales
  Drove straight and full their long clear call,
Like arrows through heroic mails,
  And love was awful in it all.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

O cold white moonlight of the north,
  Refresh these pulses, quench this hell!
O coverture of death drawn forth
  Across this garden-chamber . . well!
But what have nightingales to do
  In gloomy England, called the free . .
(Yes, free to die in! . .) when we two
  Are sundered, singing still to me?
And still they sing, the nightingales.

I think I hear him, how he cried
  'My own soul's life' between their notes.
Each man has but one soul supplied,
  And that's immortal. Though his throat's
On fire with passion now, to *her*
  He can't say what to me he said!
And yet he moves her, they aver.
  The nightingales sing through my head,
The nightingales, the nightingales.

He says to *her* what moves her most.
  He would not name his soul within
Her hearing,—rather pays her cost
  With praises to her lips and chin.

Man has but one soul, 'tis ordained,
  And each soul but one love, I add;
Yet souls are damned and love's profaned.
  These nightingales will sing me mad!
The nightingales, the nightingales.

I marvel how the birds can sing.
  There's little difference, in their view,
Betwixt our Tuscan trees that spring
  As vital flames into the blue,
And dull round blots of foliage meant
  Like saturated sponges here
To suck the fogs up. As content
  Is *he* too in this land, 'tis clear.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

My native Florence! dear, foregone!
  I see across the Alpine ridge
How the last feast-day of St. John
  Shot rockets from Carraia bridge.
The luminous city, tall with fire,
  Trod deep down in that river of ours,
While many a boat with lamp and choir
  Skimmed birdlike over glittering towers.
I will not hear these nightingales.

I seem to float, *we* seem to float
  Down Arno's stream in festive guise;
A boat strikes flame into our boat
  And up that lady seems to rise

As then she rose. The shock had flashed
A vision on us! What a head,
What leaping eyeballs!—beauty dashed
To splendour by a sudden dread.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

Too bold to sin, too weak to die;
Such women are so. As for me,
I would we had drowned there, he and I,
That moment, loving perfectly.
He had not caught her with her loosed
Gold ringlets . . rarer in the south . .
Nor heard the 'Grazie tanto' bruised
To sweetness by her English mouth.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

She had not reached him at my heart
With her fine tongue, as snakes indeed
Kill flies; nor had I, for my part,
Yearned after, in my desperate need,
And followed him as he did her
To coasts left bitter by the tide,
Whose very nightingales, elsewhere
Delighting, torture and deride!
For still they sing, the nightingales.

A worthless woman! mere cold clay
As all false things are! but so fair,
She takes the breath of men away
Who gaze upon her unaware.

I would not play her larcenous tricks
To have her looks! She lied and stole,
And spat into my love's pure pyx
The rank saliva of her soul.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

I would not for her white and pink,
Though such he likes—her grace of limb,
Though such he has praised—nor yet, I think,
For life itself, though spent with him,
Commit such sacrilege, affront
God's nature which is love, intrude
'Twixt two affianced souls, and hunt
Like spiders, in the altar's wood.
I cannot bear these nightingales.

If she chose sin, some gentler guise
She might have sinned in, so it seems:
She might have pricked out both my eyes,
And I still seen him in my dreams!
—Or drugged me in my soup or wine,
Nor left me angry afterward:
To die here with his hand in mine
His breath upon me, were not hard.
(Our Lady hush these nightingales!)

But set a springe for *him*, 'mio ben,'
My only good, my first last love!—
Though Christ knows well what sin is, when
He sees some things done they must move

Himself to wonder. Let her pass.
I think of her by night and day.
Must *I* too join her . . out, alas ! . .
With Giulio, in each word I say ?
And evermore the nightingales !

Giulio, my Giulio !—sing they so,
And you be silent ? Do I speak,
And you not hear ? An arm you throw
Round some one, and I feel so weak ?
—Oh, owl-like birds ! They sing for spite,
They sing for hate, they sing for doom !
They'll sing through death who sing through night,
They'll sing and stun me in the tomb—
The nightingales, the nightingales

THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

FIRST PART.

'Onora, Onora,'—her mother is calling,
She sits at the lattice and hears the dew falling
Drop after drop from the sycamores laden
With dew as with blossom, and calls home the maiden,
'Night cometh, Onora.'

She looks down the garden-walk caverned with trees,
To the limes at the end where the green arbour is—
'Some sweet thought or other may keep where it found her,
While, forgot or unseen in the dreamlight around her,
Night cometh—Onora!'

She looks up the forest whose alleys shoot on
Like the mute minster-aisles when the anthem is done,
And the choristers sitting with faces aslant
Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant—
'Onora, Onora!'

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—
'Onora, art coming?'—what is it she seeth?
Nought, nought but the grey border-stone that is wist
To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist—
'My daughter!' Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so
She is 'ware of her little son playing below:
'Now where is Onora?' He hung down his head
And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet-red,—
'At the tryst with her lover.'

But his mother was wroth: in a sternness quoth she,
'As thou play'st at the ball art thou playing with me?
When we know that her lover to battle is gone,
And the saints know above that she loveth but one
And will ne'er wed another?'

Then the boy wept aloud; 'twas a fair sight yet sad
To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had:
He stamped with his foot, said—'The saints know I lied
Because truth that is wicked is fittest to hide!
Must I utter it, mother?'

In his vehement childhood he hurried within
And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin,
But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—
'Oh! she sits with the nun of the brown rosary,
At nights in the ruin—

The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,
Where the owl hoots by day and the toad is sun-proof,
Where no singing-birds build and the trees gaunt and grey
As in stormy sea-coasts appear blasted one way—
But is *this* the wind's doing?

'A nun in the east wall was buried alive
Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,
And shrieked such a curse, as the stone took her breath,
The old abbess fell backward and swooned unto death
With an Ave half-spoken.

'I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,
Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground—
A brave hound, my mother! a brave hound, ye wot!
And the wolf thought the same with his fangs at her throat
In the pass of the Brocken.

'At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there
With the brown rosary never used for a prayer?
Stoop low, mother, low! If we went there to see
What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be
At dawn and at even!

'Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even?
Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven?
O sweetest my sister, what doeth with *thee*
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary
And a face turned from heaven?

'St. Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams and erewhile
I have felt through mine eyelids the warmth of her smile;
But last night, as a sadness like pity came o'er her,
She whispered—"Say *two* prayers at dawn for Onora
The Tempted is sinning."'

'Onora, Onora!' they heard her not coming,
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming;
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,
And a smile just beginning:

It touches her lips but it dares not arise
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes,
And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,
Sing on like the angels in separate glory
Between clouds of amber;

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured till stirred
Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word ;
While—O soft !—her speaking is so interwound
Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight of sound
And floats through the chamber.

'Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother,' said she,
'I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me ;
And I know by the hills that the battle is done,
That my lover rides on, will be here with the sun,
'Neath the eyes that behold thee.'

Her mother sat silent—too tender, I wis,
Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss :
But the boy started up pale with tears, passion-wrought—
'O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought !
If he cometh, who told thee ?'

'I know by the hills,' she resumed calm and clear,
'By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear :
Did they ever look *so* since he bade me adieu ?
Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true
As St. Agnes in sleeping !'

Half-ashamed and half softened the boy did not speak,
And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek :
She bowed down to kiss him : dear saints, did he see
Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY,
That he shrank away weeping ?

SECOND PART.

A bed. ONORA *sleeping.* Angels, *but not near.*

First Angel.

Must we stand so far, and she
So very fair?

Second Angel.

As bodies be.

First Angel.

And she so mild?

Second Angel.

As spirits when
They meeken, not to God, but men.

First Angel.

And she so young, that I who bring
Good dreams for saintly children, might
Mistake that small soft face to-night,
And fetch her such a blessëd thing
That at her waking she would weep
For childhood lost anew in sleep.
How hath she sinned?

Second Angel.

In bartering love;
God's love for man's.

First Angel.

We may reprove
The world for this, not only her:
Let me approach to breathe away
This dust o' the heart with holy air.

Second Angel.

Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

First Angel.

Did none pray for her?

Second Angel.

Ay, a child,—
Who never, praying, wept before:
While, in a mother undefiled,
Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true
And pauseless as the pulses do.

First Angel.

Then I approach.

Second Angel.

It is not WILLED.

First Angel.

One word: is she redeemed?

Second Angel.

No more!
The place is filled.

[Angels *vanish.*

Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the bed.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream! too near to heaven it leaned.

Onora, in sleep.

Nay, leave me this—but only this! 'tis but a dream, sweet fiend!

Evil Spirit. It is a *thought.*

Onora, in sleep.

A sleeping thought—most innocent of good:
It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend! it cannot, if it would.
I say in it no holy hymn, I do no holy work,
I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that chimeth from the kirk.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream !

Onora, in sleep.

Nay, let me dream at least.
That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast :
I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn-sun,
With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often done.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream !

Onora, in sleep.

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go :
I never more can walk with *him*, oh, never more but so !
For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirkyard-stone,
Oh, deep and straight, oh, very straight ! they move at nights alone :
And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth tenderly,
'Come forth, my daughter, my beloved, and walk the fields with me !'

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its pureness by a sign.

Onora, in sleep.

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied, my word shall answer thine.
I heard a bird which used to sing when I a child was praying,
I see the poppies in the corn I used to sport away in :
What shall I do—tread down the dew and pull the blossoms blowing ?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the rowen ?

Evil Spirit.

Thou shalt do something harder still. Stand up where thou dost stand

Among the fields of Dreamland with thy father hand in hand,

And clear and slow repeat the vow, declare its cause and kind,

Which not to break, in sleep or wake thou bearest on thy mind.

Onora, in sleep.

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow for mournful cause ;

I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong, the spirits laughed applause :

The spirits trailed along the pines low laughter like a breeze,

While, high atween their swinging tops, the stars appeared to freeze.

Evil Spirit.

More calm and free, speak out to me why such a vow was made.

Onora, in sleep.

Because that God decreed my death and I shrank back afraid.

Have patience, O dead father mine ! I did not fear to die—

I wish I were a young dead child and had thy company !

I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year child,

And wearing only a kiss of thine upon my lips that smiled !

The linden-tree that covers thee might so have shadowed twain,
For death itself I did not fear—'tis love that makes the pain:
Love feareth death. I was no child, I was betrothed that day;
I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I could not give away.
How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a stone,
And feel mine own betrothed go by—alas! no more mine own—
Go leading by in wedding pomp some lovely lady brave,
With cheeks that blushed as red as rose, while mine were white in grave?
How could I bear to sit in heaven, on e'er so high a throne,
And hear him say to her—to *her!* that else he loveth none?
Though e'er so high I sat above, though e'er so low he spake,
As clear as thunder I should hear the new oath he might take,
That hers, forsooth, were heavenly eyes—ah me, while very dim
Some heavenly eyes (indeed of heaven!) would darken down to *him!*

Evil Spirit.

Who told thee thou wast called to death?

Onora, in sleep.

I sat all night beside thee;
The grey owl on the ruined wall shut both his eyes to hide thee,

And ever he flapped his heavy wing all brokenly and weak,
And the long grass waved against the sky, around his gasping beak :
I sat beside thee all the night, while the moonlight lay forlorn
Strewn round us like a dead world's shroud in ghastly fragments torn :
And through the night, and through the hush, and over the flapping wing,
We heard beside the Heavenly Gate the angels murmuring :
We heard them say, 'Put day to day, and count the days to seven,
And God will draw Onora up the golden stairs of heaven ;
'And yet the Evil ones have leave that purpose to defer,
'For if she has no need of HIM, He has no need of her.'

Evil Spirit.

Speak out to me, speak bold and free.

Onora, in sleep.

And then I heard thee say—
'I count upon my rosary brown the hours thou hast to stay ;
'Yet God permits us Evil ones to put by that decree,
'Since if thou hast no need of HIM, He has no need of thee :
'And if thou wilt forego the sight of angels, verily
'Thy true love gazing on thy face shall guess what angels be ;

'Nor bride shall pass, save thee' . . . Alas!—my father's hand 's a-cold,
The meadows seem . . .
Evil Spirit.
Forbear the dream, or let the vow be told.
Onora, in sleep.
I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this string of antique beads,
By charnel lichens overgrown, and dank among the weeds,
This rosary brown which is thine own,—lost soul of buried nun!
Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all souls alike undone,—
I vowed upon thy rosary brown,—and, till such vow should break,
A pledge always of living days 'twas hung around my neck—
I vowed to thee on rosary (dead father, look not so!)
I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in my woe.
Evil Spirit.
And canst thou prove . . .
Onora, in sleep.
O love, my love! I felt him near again!
I saw his steed on mountain-head, I heard it on the plain!
Was this no weal for me to feel? Is greater weal than this?
Yet when he came, I wept his name—and the angels heard but *his.*

Evil Spirit.
Well done, well done!
Onora, in sleep.
Ah me, the sun! the dreamlight 'gins to pine,—
Ah me, how dread can look the Dead! Aroint thee, father mine!

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth upright,
And her breath comes in sobs while she stares through the night;
There is nought; the great willow, her lattice before
Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor:
But her hands tremble fast as their pulses, and, free
From the death-clasp close over—the BROWN ROSARY.

THIRD PART.

'Tis a morn for a bridal; the merry bride-bell
Rings clear through the green-wood that skirts the chapelle,
And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,
And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside
At the work shall be doing;

While down through the wood rides that fair company,
The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,
Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and at once
All the maids sigh demurely and think for the nonce,
'And so endeth a wooing!'

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,
With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say:

Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,
And the little quick smiles come and go with her breath
When she sigheth or speaketh.

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware
From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,
Till in nearing the chapel and glancing before,
She seeth her little son stand at the door:
Is it play that he seeketh?

Is it play, when his eyes wander innocent-wild
And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a child?
He trembles not, weeps not; the passion is done,
And calmly he kneels in their midst, with the sun
On his head like a glory.

'O fair-featured maids, ye are many!' he cried,
'But in fairness and vileness who matcheth the bride?
O brave-hearted youths, ye are many, but whom
For the courage and woe can ye match with the groom
As ye see them before ye?'

Out spake the bride's mother, 'The vileness is thine
If thou shame thine own sister, a bride at the shrine!'
Out spake the bride's lover, 'The vileness be mine
If he shame mine own wife at the hearth or the shrine
And the charge be unprovëd.

'Bring the charge, prove the charge, brother! speak it aloud:
Let thy father and hers hear it deep in his shroud!'
—'O father, thou seest, for dead eyes can see,
How she wears on her bosom *a brown rosary*,
O my father belovëd!'

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and outlaughed withal
Both maidens and youths by the old chapel-wall:
'So she weareth no love-gift, kind brother,' quoth he,
'She may wear an she listeth a brown rosary,
Like a pure-hearted lady.'

Then swept through the chapel the long bridal train;
Though he spake to the bride she replied not again:
On, as one in a dream, pale and stately she went
Where the altar-lights burn o'er the great sacrament,
Faint with daylight, but steady.

But her brother had passed in between them and her,
And calmly knelt down on the high altar-stair—
Of an infantine aspect so stern to the view
That the priest could not smile on the child's eyes of blue
As he would for another.

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured and white
That seems kneeling to pray on the tomb of a knight,
With a look taken up to each iris of stone
From the greatness and death where he kneeleth, but none
From the face of a mother.

'In your chapel, O priest, ye have wedded and shriven
Fair wives for the hearth, and fair sinners for heaven;
But this fairest my sister, ye think now to wed,
Bid her kneel where she standeth, and shrive her instead:
O shrive her and wed not!'

In tears, the bride's mother,—'Sir priest, unto thee
Would he lie, as he lied to this fair company.'
In wrath, the bride's lover,—'The lie shall be clear!
Speak it out, boy! the saints in their niches shall hear:
Be the charge proved or said not!'

Then serene in his childhood he lifted his face,
And his voice sounded holy and fit for the place,—
'Look down from your niches, ye still saints, and see
How she wears on her bosom *a brown rosary*!
Is it used for the praying?'

The youths looked aside—to laugh there were a sin—
And the maidens' lips trembled from smiles shut within:
Quoth the priest, 'Thou art wild, pretty boy! Blessëd she
Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosary
To a worldly arraying.'

The bridegroom spake low and led onward the bride,
And before the high altar they stood side by side:
The rite-book is opened, the rite is begun,
They have knelt down together to rise up as one.
Who laughed by the altar?

The maidens looked forward, the youths looked around,
The bridegroom's eye flashed from his prayer at the sound;
And each saw the bride, as if no bride she were,
Gazing cold at the priest without gesture of prayer,
As he read from the psalter.

The priest never knew that she did so, but still
He felt a power on him too strong for his will,
And whenever the Great Name was there to be read,
His voice sank to silence—THAT could not be said,
Or the air could not hold it.

'I have sinnëd,' quoth he, 'I have sinnëd, I wot'—
And the tears ran adown his old cheeks at the thought:

They dropped fast on the book, but he read on the same,
And aye was the silence where should be the NAME,—
As the choristers told it.

The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done
They who knelt down together, arise up as one :
Fair riseth the bride—oh, a fair bride is she,
But, for all (think the maidens) that brown rosary,
No saint at her praying !

What aileth the bridegroom? He glares blank and wide ;
Then suddenly turning he kisseth the bride ;
His lip stung her with cold ; she glanced upwardly mute :
'Mine own wife,' he said, and fell stark at her foot
In the word he was saying.

They have lifted him up, but his head sinks away,
And his face showeth bleak in the sunshine and grey.
Leave him now where he lieth—for oh, never more
Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a floor !
Let his bride gaze upon him.

Long and still was her gaze while they chafëd him there
And breathed in the mouth whose last life had kissed her,
But when they stood up—only *they!* with a start
The shriek from her soul struck her pale lips apart :
She has lived, and foregone him !

And low on his body she droppeth adown—
'Didst call me thine own wife, belovëd—thine own?

Then take thine own with thee ! thy coldness is warm
To the world's cold without thee. Come, keep me from harm
In a calm of thy teaching !'

She looked in his face earnest-long, as in sooth
There were hope of an answer, and then kissed his mouth
And with head on his bosom, wept, wept bitterly,—
'Now, O God, take pity—take pity on me !
God, hear my beseeching !'

She was 'ware of a shadow that crossed where she lay,
She was 'ware of a presence that withered the day :
Wild she sprang to her feet,—'I surrender to *thee*
The broken vow's pledge, the accursed rosary,—
I am ready for dying !'

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-paved ground
Where it fell mute as snow, and a weird music-sound
Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long and dim,—
As the fiends tried to mock at the choristers' hymn
And moaned in the trying.

FOURTH PART.

ONORA looketh listlessly adown the garden walk :
'I am weary, O my mother, of thy tender talk.
I am weary of the trees a-waving to and fro,
Of the steadfast skies above, the running brooks below.
All things are the same but I,—only I am dreary,
And, mother, of my dreariness behold me very weary.

'Mother, brother, pull the flowers I planted in the spring
And smiled to think I should smile more upon their gathering:
The bees will find out other flowers—oh, pull them, dearest mine,
And carry them and carry me before St. Agnes' shrine!'
—Whereat they pulled the summer flowers she planted in the spring,
And her and them all mournfully to Agnes' shrine did bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint and gently shook her head—
The picture is too calm for *me*—too calm for *me*,' she said:
'The little flowers we brought with us, before it we may lay,
For those are used to look at heaven,—but *I* must turn away,
Because no sinner under sun can dare or bear to gaze
On God's or angel's holiness, except in Jesu's face.'

She spoke with passion after pause—'And were it wisely done
If we who cannot gaze above, should walk the earth alone?
If we whose virtue is so weak should have a will so strong,
And stand blind on the rocks to choose the right path from the wrong?

To choose perhaps a lovelit hearth, instead of love and heaven,—
A single rose, for a rose-tree which beareth seven times seven?
A rose that droppeth from the hand, that fadeth in the breast,—
Until, in grieving for the worst, we learn what is the best!'
Then breaking into tears,—'Dear God,' she cried, 'and must we see
All blissful things depart from us or e'er we go to THEE?
We cannot guess thee in the wood or hear thee in the wind?
Our cedars must fall round us ere we see the light behind?
Ay sooth, we feel too strong, in weal, to need thee on that road,
But woe being come, the soul is dumb that crieth not on 'God.''

Her mother could not speak for tears; she ever musëd thus,
'*The bees will find out other flowers*,—but what is left for *us*?'
But her young brother stayed his sobs and knelt beside her knee,
—'Thou sweetest sister in the world, hast never a word for me?'
She passed her hand across his face, she pressed it on his cheek,
So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that day, at vespers
bloomed no more.
The woman fair who placed it there, had died an hour
before.
Both perished mute for lack of root, earth's nourishment
to reach.
O reader, breathe (the ballad saith) some sweetness out
of each!

A REED.

I AM no trumpet, but a reed ;
No flattering breath shall from me lead
A silver sound, a hollow sound :
I will not ring, for priest or king,
One blast that in re-echoing
Would leave a bondsman faster bound.

I am no trumpet, but a reed,—
A broken reed, the wind indeed
Left flat upon a dismal shore ;
Yet if a little maid or child
Should sigh within it, earnest-mild
This reed will answer evermore.

I am no trumpet, but a reed;
Go, tell the fishers, as they spread
Their nets along the river's edge,
I will not tear their nets at all,
Nor pierce their hands, if they should fall :
Then let them leave me in the sedge.

TO FLUSH, MY DOG.

Loving friend, the gift of one
Who her own true faith has run
Through thy lower nature,
Be my benediction said
With my hand upon thy head,
Gentle fellow-creature!

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
Flow thy silken ears adown
Either side demurely
Of thy silver-suited breast
Shining out from all the rest
Of thy body purely.

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine striking this
Alchemize its dulness,
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold
With a burnished fulness.

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
Kindling, growing larger,
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curveting,
Leaping like a charger.

Leap ! thy broad tail waves a light,
Leap ! thy slender feet are bright,
  Canopied in fringes ;
Leap ! those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine
  Down their golden inches.

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
Little is 't to such an end
  That I praise thy rareness ;
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in these drooping ears
  And this glossy fairness.

But of *thee* it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
  Day and night unweary,
Watched within a curtained room
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
  Round the sick and dreary.

Roses, gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
  Beam and breeze resigning ;
This dog only, waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone
  Love remains for shining.

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed through
  Sunny moor or meadow ;
This dog only, crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
  Sharing in the shadow.

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
  Up the woodside hieing;
This dog only watched in reach
Of a faintly-uttered speech
  Or a louder sighing.

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears
  Or a sigh came double,
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast
  In a tender trouble.

And this dog was satisfied
If a pale thin hand would glide
  Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
  On the palm left open.

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blither choice
  Than such chamber-keeping,
'Come out!' praying from the door,—
Presseth backward as before,
  Up against me leaping.

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
  Render praise and favour:
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
  Therefore and for ever.

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
  Often man or woman,
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,
  Leaning from my Human.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
  Sugared milk make fat thee!
Pleasures wag on in thy tail,
Hands of gentle motion fail
  Nevermore, to pat thee!

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
  Sunshine help thy sleeping!
No fly's buzzing wake thee up,
No man break thy purple cup
  Set for drinking deep in.

Whiskered cats arointed flee,
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
  Cologne distillations;
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
And thy feast-day macaroons
  Turn to daily rations!

Mock I thee, in wishing weal?—
Tears are in my eyes to feel
  Thou art made so straitly,
Blessing needs must straighten too,—
Little canst thou joy or do,
  Thou who lovest *greatly*.

Yet be blessëd to the height
Of all good and all delight
Pervious to thy nature;
Only *loved* beyond that line,
With a love that answers thine,
Loving fellow-creature!

MY DOVES.

My little doves have left a nest
Upon an Indian tree
Whose leaves fantastic take their rest
Or motion from the sea;
For, ever there the sea-winds go
With sunlit paces to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,
The tropic stars looked down,
And there my little doves did sit
With feathers softly brown,
And glittering eyes that showed their right
To general Nature's deep delight.

And God them taught, at every close
Of murmuring waves beyond
And green leaves round, to interpose
Their choral voices fond,
Interpreting that love must be
The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers! Of living loves
Theirs hath the calmest fashion,
Their living voice the likest moves
To lifeless intonation,
The lovely monotone of springs
And winds and such insensate things.

My little doves were ta'en away
From that glad nest of theirs,
Across an ocean rolling grey,
And tempest-clouded airs;
My little doves, who lately knew
The sky and wave by warmth and blue.

And now, within the city prison,
In mist and chillness pent,
With sudden upward look they listen
For sounds of past content,
For lapse of water, swell of breeze,
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion,
The triumph of the mart,
The gold and silver as they clash on
Man's cold metallic heart,
The roar of wheels, the cry for bread,
These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand
Their fearless heads they lean,
And almost seem to understand
What human musings mean,
(Their eyes with such a plaintive shine
Are fastened upwardly to mine)—

Soft falls their chant as on the nest
Beneath the sunny zone;
For love that stirred it in their breast
Has not aweary grown:
And 'neath the city's shade can keep
The well of music clear and deep.

And love that keeps the music, fills
With pastoral memories;
All echoings from out the hills,
All droppings from the skies,
All flowings from the wave and wind,
Remembered in their chant, I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,
My little doves! to move
Along the city-ways with heart
Assured by holy love,
And vocal with such songs as own
A fountain to the world unknown.

'Twas hard, to sing by Babel's stream—
More hard, in Babel's street:
But if the soulless creatures deem
Their music not unmeet
For sunless walls—let *us* begin,
Who wear immortal wings within!

To me, fair memories belong
Of scenes that used to bless,
For no regret, but present song
And lasting thankfulness;
And very soon to break away,
Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,
For flowers the valley yields;
I will have humble thoughts instead
Of silent, dewy fields:
My spirit and my God shall be
My sea-ward hill, my boundless sea.

THE SEA-MEW.

How joyously the young sea-mew
Lay dreaming on the waters blue
Whereon our little bark had thrown
A little shade, the only one,
But shadows ever man pursue.

Familiar with the waves and free
As if their own white foam were he,
His heart upon the heart of ocean
Lay learning all its mystic motion,
And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

And such a brightness in his eye
As if the ocean and the sky
Within him had lit up and nurst
A soul God gave him not at first,
To comprehend their majesty.

We were not cruel, yet did sunder
His white wing from the blue waves under,
And bound it, while his fearless eyes
Shone up to ours in calm surprise,
As deeming us some ocean wonder.

We bore our ocean bird unto
A grassy place where he might view
The flowers that curtsey to the bees,
The waving of the tall green trees,
The falling of the silver dew.

But flowers of earth were pale to him
Who had seen the rainbow's hues unwind;
And when earth's dew around him lay
He thought of ocean's winged spray,
And his eye waxed wet and dim.

The grass was round him only made
A prison with its verdurous shade;
And dropped his wing, and mourned he
For his own boundless gleaming sea—
Albeit he knew not they could fade.

Then One her gladsome face did bring,
Her gentle voice a murmuring,
To wean his heart to move
And teach him what was human love:
He thought it a strange mournful thing.

He lay down at her feet to die,
Pined looking to the weedless sky
That hath no waves, because, alas!
Our human touch did on him pass,
And with our touch, our agony.

THE SLEEP.

Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward into souls afar,
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace surpassing this—
'He giveth His belovëd, sleep?'

What would we give to our beloved?
The hero's heart to be unmoved,
The poet's star-tuned harp to sweep,
The patriot's voice to teach and rouse,
The monarch's crown to light the brows?—
He giveth His belovëd, sleep.

What do we give to our beloved?
A little faith all undisproved,
A little dust to overweep,
And bitter memories to make
The whole earth blasted for our sake:
He giveth His belovëd, sleep.

'Sleep soft, beloved!' we sometimes say,
Who have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep:
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
He giveth his belovëd, sleep.

O earth, so full of dreary noises!
O men, with wailing in your voices!
O delvëd gold, the wailers heap!
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall!
God strikes a silence through you all,
And giveth His belovëd, sleep.

His dews drop mutely on the hill,
His cloud above it saileth still,
Though on its slope men sow and reap:
More softly than the dew is shed,
Or cloud is floated overhead,
He giveth His belovëd, sleep.

Ay, men may wonder while they scan
A living, thinking, feeling man
Confirmed in such a rest to keep;
But angels say, and through the word
I think their happy smile is *heard*—
'He giveth His belovëd, sleep.'

For me, my heart that erst did go
Most like a tired child at a show,
That sees through tears the mummers leap,
Would now its wearied vision close,
Would childlike on His love repose
Who giveth His belovëd, sleep.

And friends, dear friends, when it shall be
That this low breath is gone from me,
And round my bier ye come to weep,
Let One, most loving of you all,
Say, 'Not a tear must o'er her fall!
'He giveth His belovëd sleep.'

COWPER'S GRAVE.

It is a place where poets crowned may feel the heart's decaying;
It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their praying:
Yet let the grief and humbleness as low as silence languish:
Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she gave her anguish.

O poets, from a maniac's tongue was poured the deathless singing!
O Christians, at your cross of hope a hopeless hand was clinging!
O men, this man in brotherhood your weary paths beguiling,
Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died while ye were smiling!

And now, what time ye all may read through dimming tears his story,
How discord on the music fell and darkness on the glory,
And how when, one by one, sweet sounds and wandering lights departed,
He wore no less a loving face because so broken-hearted,—

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adoration;
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken,
Named softly as the household name of one whom God hath taken.

With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn to think upon him,
With meekness that is gratefulness to God whose heaven hath won him,
Who suffered once the madness-cloud to His own love to blind him,
But gently led the blind along where breath and bird could find him;

And wrought within his shattered brain such quick poetic senses
As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious influences:
The pulse of dew upon the grass kept his within its number,
And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like a slumber.

Wild timid hares were drawn from woods to share his home-caresses,
Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan tendernesses:
The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehood's ways removing,
Its women and its men became, beside him, true and loving.

And though, in blindness, he remained unconscious of
that guiding,
And things provided came without the sweet sense of
providing,
He testified this solemn truth, while phrenzy desolated,
—Nor man nor nature satisfies whom only God created.

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother while she
blesses
And drops upon his burning brow the coolness of her
kisses,—
That turns his fevered eyes around—'My mother!
where's my mother?'—
As if such tender words and deeds could come from any
other!—

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he sees her bending
o'er him,
Her face all pale from watchful love, the unweary love she
bore him!—
Thus woke the poet from the dream his life's long fever
gave him,
Beneath those deep pathetic eyes which closed in death
to save him.

Thus? oh, not *thus*! no type of earth can image that
awaking,
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs, round
him breaking,
Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body parted,
But felt those eyes alone, and knew,—'*My* Saviour! *not*
deserted!'

Deserted! Who hath dreamt that when the cross in darkness rested,
Upon the Victim's hidden face no love was manifested?
What frantic hands outstretched have e'er the atoning drops averted?
What tears have washed them from the soul, that *one* should be deserted?

Deserted! God could separate from His own essence rather;
And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous Son and Father:
Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry His universe hath shaken—
It went up single, echoless, 'My God, I am forsaken!'

It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use those words of desolation!
That earth's worst phrenzies, marring hope, should mar not hope's fruition,
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture in a vision.

CROWNED AND BURIED.

NAPOLEON !—years ago, and that great word
Compàct of human breath in hate and dread
And exultation, skied us overhead—
An atmosphere whose lightning was the sword
Scathing the cedars of the world,—drawn down
In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

Napoleon !—nations, while they cursed that name,
Shook at their own curse ; and while others bore
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
Brass-fronted legions justified its fame ;
And dying men on trampled battle-sods
Near their last silence uttered it for God's.

Napoleon !—sages, with high foreheads drooped,
Did use it for a problem ; children small
Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's call ;
Priests blessed it from their altars overstooped
By meek-eyed Christs ; and widows with a moan
Spake it, when questioned why they sat alone.

That name consumed the silence of the snows
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-hid ;
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's did,
And over-rushed her mountainous repose
In search of eyries : and the Egyptian river
Mingled the same word with its grand 'For ever.'

That name was shouted near the pyramidal
Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habitants,
Packed to humanity's significance,
Motioned it back with stillness,—shouts as idle
As hireling artists' work of myrrh and spice
Which swathed last glories round the Ptolemies.

The world's face changed to hear it; kingly men
Came down in chidden babes' bewilderment
From autocratic places, each content
With sprinkled ashes for anointing: then
The people laughed or wondered for the nonce,
To see one throne a composite of thrones.

Napoleon!—even the torrid vastitude
Of India felt in throbbings of the air
That name which scattered by disastrous blare
All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn afresh in blood.
Napoleon!—from the Russias west to Spain:
And Austria trembled till ye heard her chain.

And Germany was 'ware; and Italy
Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-locked,
High-ghosted Cæsars passing uninvoked—
Did crumble her own ruins with her knee,
To serve a newer: ay! but Frenchmen cast
A future from them nobler than her past:

For verily though France augustly rose
With that raised NAME, and did assume by such
The purple of the world, none gave so much
As she in purchase—to speak plain, in loss—
Whose hands, toward freedom stretched, dropped paralyzed
To wield a sword or fit an undersized

King's crown to a great man's head. And though along
Her Paris streets, did float on frequent streams
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled dreams
Dreamt right by genius in a world gone wrong,—
No dream of all so won was fair to see
As the lost vision of her liberty.

Napoleon !—'twas a high name lifted high :
It met at last God's thunder sent to clear
Our compassing and covering atmosphere
And open a clear sight beyond the sky
Of supreme empire ; this of earth's was done—
And kings crept out again to feel the sun.

The kings crept out—the peoples sat at home,
And finding the long-invocated peace
(A pall embroidered with worn images
Of rights divine) too scant to cover doom
Such as they suffered, cursed the corn that grew
Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo.

A deep gloom centered in the deep repose ;
The nations stood up mute to count their dead :
And he who owned the NAME which vibrated
Through silence,—trusting to its noblest foes
When earth was all too grey for chivalry,
Died of their mercies 'mid the desert sea.

O wild St. Helen ! very still she kept him,
With a green willow for all pyramid,
Which stirred a little if the low wind did,
A little more, if pilgrims overwept him,
Disparting the lithe boughs to see the clay
Which seemed to cover his for judgment-day.

Nay, not so long! France kept her old affection
As deeply as the sepulchre the corse;
Until, dilated by such love's remorse
To a new angel of the resurrection,
She cried, 'Behold, thou England! I would have
The dead whereof thou wottest, from that grave.'

And England answered in the courtesy
Which, ancient foes turned lovers, may befit,—
'Take back thy dead! and when thou buriest it,
Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee and me.'
Amen, mine England! 'tis a courteous claim:
But ask a little room too—for thy shame!

Because it was not well, it was not well,
Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted part
Among the Oceanides,—that Heart
To bind and bare and vex with vulture fell.
I would, my noble England, men might seek
All crimson stains upon thy breast—not cheek!

I would that hostile fleets had scarred Torbay,
Instead of the lone ship which waited moored
Until thy princely purpose was assured,
Then left a shadow, not to pass away—
Not for to-night's moon, nor to-morrow's sun:
Green watching hills, ye witnessed what was done!

But since it *was* done,—in sepulchral dust
We fain would pay back something of our debt
To France, if not to honour, and forget
How through much fear we falsified the trust
Of a fallen foe and exile. We return
Orestes to Electra—in his urn.

A little urn—a little dust inside,
Which once outbalanced the large earth, albeit
To-day a four-years child might carry it
Sleek-browed and smiling, 'Let the burden 'bide!'
Orestes to Electra!—O fair town
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down

And run back in the chariot-marks of time,
When all the people shall come forth to meet
The passive victor, death-still in the street
He rode through 'mid the shouting and bell-chime
And martial music, under eagles which
Dyed their rapacious beaks at Austerlitz!

Napoleon! he hath come again, borne home
Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea
Which gathers its own wrecks perpetually,
Majestically moaning. Give him room!
Room for the dead in Paris! welcome solemn
And grave-deep, 'neath the cannon-moulded column!

There, weapon spent and warrior spent may rest
From roar of fields,—provided Jupiter
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near
His bolts!—and this he may: for, dispossessed
Of any godship lies the godlike arm—
The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do harm.

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recovered name
Shakes the old casements of the world; and we
Look out upon the passing pageantry,
Attesting that the Dead makes good his claim
To a French grave,—another kingdom won,
The last, of few spans—by Napoleon.

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—sooth.
But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
Meridian light. He was a despot—granted!
But the curse of his autocratic mouth
Said yea if the people's French; he magnified
The image of the freedom he denied:

And if they asked for rights, he made reply
'Ye have my glory!'—and so, drawing round them
His ample purple, glorified and bound them
In an embrace that seemed identity.
He ruled them like a tyrant—true! but none
Were ruled like slaves: each felt Napoleon.

I do not praise this man: the man was flawed
For Adam—much more, Christ! his knee unbent,
His hand unclean, his aspiration pent
Within a sword-sweep—phew!—but since he had
The genius to be loved, why let him have
The justice to be honoured in his grave.

I think this nation's tears thus poured together,
Better than shouts. I think this funeral
Grander than crownings, though a Pope bless all.
I think this grave stronger than thrones. But whether
The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay
Be worthier, I discern not: angels may.

A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS.

We are borne into life—it is sweet, it is strange.
We lie still on the knee of a mild Mystery
Which smiles with a change;
But we doubt not of changes, we know not of spaces,
The heavens seem as near as our own mother's face is,
And we think we could touch all the stars that we see;
And the milk of our mother is white on our mouth;
And, with small childish hands, we are turning around
The apple of Life which another has found;
It is warm with our touch, not with sun of the south,
And we count, as we turn it, the red side for four.
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange evermore!

Then all things look strange in the pure golden æther;
We walk through the gardens with hands linked together,
And the lilies look large as the trees;
And as loud as the birds, sing the bloom-loving bees,
And the birds sing like angels, so mystical-fine,
And the cedars are brushing the archangels' feet,
And time is eternity, love is divine,
And the world is complete.
Now, God bless the child,—father, mother, respond!
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet.

Then we leap on the earth with the armour of youth,
And the earth rings again ;
And we breathe out, 'O beauty!' we cry out, 'O truth!'
And the bloom of our lips drops with wine,
And our blood runs amazed 'neath the calm hyaline ;
The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun burns to the brain,—
What is this exultation? and what this despair?—
The strong pleasure is smiting the nerves into pain,
And we drop from the Fair as we climb to the Fair,
And we lie in a trance at its feet ;
And the breath of an angel cold-piercing the air
Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon,
And we think him so near he is this side the sun,
And we wake to a whisper self-murmured and fond,
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

And the winds and the waters in pastoral measures
Go winding around us, with roll upon roll,
Till the soul lies within in a circle of pleasures
Which hideth the soul:
And we run with the stag, and we leap with the horse,
And we swim with the fish through the broad water-course,
And we strike with the falcon, and hunt with the hound,
And the joy which is in us flies out by a wound.
And we shout so aloud, 'We exult, we rejoice,'
That we lose the low moan of our brothers around:
And we shout so adeep down creation's profound,
We are deaf to God's voice.
And we bind the rose-garland on forehead and ears

Yet we are not ashamed,
And the dew of the roses that runneth unblamed
Down our cheeks, is not taken for tears.
Help us, God! trust us, man, love us, woman! 'I hold
Thy small head in my hands,—with its grapelets of gold
Growing bright through my fingers,—like altar for oath,
'Neath the vast golden spaces like witnessing faces
That watch the eternity strong in the troth—
I love thee, I leave thee,
Live for thee, die for thee!
I prove thee, deceive thee,
Undo evermore thee!
Help me, God! slay me, man!—one is mourning for both.
And we stand up though young near the funeral-sheet
Which covers old Cæsar and old Pharamond,
And death is so nigh us, life cools from its heat.
O Life, O Beyond,
Art thou fair, *art* thou sweet?

Then we act to a purpose, we spring up erect:
We will tame the wild mouths of the wilderness-steeds,
We will plough up the deep in the ships double-decked,
We will build the great cities, and do the great deeds,
Strike the steel upon steel, strike the soul upon soul,
Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming the dole.
Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand thunder-roll!
'While the eagle of Thought rides the tempest in scorn,
Who cares if the lightning is burning the corn?
Let us sit on the thrones
In a purple sublimity,
And grind down men's bones
To a pale unanimity.

Speed me, God ! serve me, man ! I am God over men ;
When I speak in my cloud, none shall answer again ;
'Neath the stripe and the bond,
Lie and mourn at my feet !'
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

Then we grow into thought, and with inward ascensions
Touch the bounds of our Being.
We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly around
With our sensual relations and social conventions,
Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware of a sound
Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—
Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all sides
With its infinite tides
About and above us,—until the strong arch
Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,
And through the dim rolling we hear the sweet calling
Of spirits that speak in a soft under-tongue
The sense of the mystical march :
And we cry to them softly, 'Come nearer, come nearer,
And lift up the lap of this dark, and speak clearer,
And teach us the song that ye sung !'
And we smile in our thought as they answer or no,
For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as to know.
Wonders breathe in our face
And we ask not their name ;
Love takes all the blame
Of the world's prison-place.
And we sing back the songs as we guess them, aloud,
And we send up the lark of our music that cuts
Untired through the cloud
To beat with its wings at the lattice Heaven shuts ;

Yet the angels look down and the mortals look up
As the little wings beat,
And the poet is blessed with their pity or hope.
'Twixt the heavens and the earth *can* a poet despond?
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

Then we wring from our souls their applicative strength,
And bend to the cord the strong bow of our ken,
And bringing our lives to the level of others
Hold the cup we have filled, to their uses at length.
'Help me, God! love me, man! I am man among men,
And my life is a pledge
Of the ease of another's!'
From the fire and the water we drive out the steam
With a rush and a roar and the speed of a dream;
And the car without horses, the car without wings,
Roars onward and flies
On its grey iron edge
'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting still in our eyes:
And our hand knots in air, with the bridge that it flings,
Two peaks far disruptured by ocean and skies,
And, lifting a fold of the smooth-flowing Thames,
Draws under the world with its turmoils and pothers,
While the swans float on softly, untouched in their calms,
By humanity's hum at the root of the springs.
And with reachings of Thought we reach down to the deeps
Of the souls of our brothers,
We teach them full words with our slow-moving lips,
'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth,'—which they hearken and think
And work into harmony, link upon link.

Till the silver meets round the earth gelid and dense,
Shedding sparks of electric responding intense
On the dark of eclipse.
Then we hear through the silence and glory afar,
As from shores of a star
In aphelion, the new generations that cry
Disenthralled by our voice to harmonious reply,
'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth!'
We are glorious forsooth,
And our name has a seat,
Though the shroud should be donned.
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

Help me, God! help me, man! I am low, I am weak,
Death loosens my sinews and creeps in my veins,
My body is cleft by these wedges of pains
From my spirit's serene,
And I feel the externe and insensate creep in
On my organized clay;
I sob not, nor shriek,
Yet I faint fast away:
I am strong in the spirit,—deep-thoughted, clear-eyed,—
I could walk, step for step, with an angel beside,
On the heaven-heights of truth.
Oh, the soul keeps its youth!
But the body faints sore, it is tired in the race,
It sinks from the chariot ere reaching the goal,
It is weak, it is cold,
The rein drops from its hold,
It sinks back, with the death in its face.

On, chariot! on, soul!
Ye are all the more fleet—
Be alone at the goal
Of the strange and the sweet!

Love us, God! love us, man! we believe, we achieve:
Let us love, let us live,
For the acts correspond;
We are glorious, and DIE:
And again on the knee of a mild Mystery
That smiles with a change,
Here we lie.
O DEATH, O BEYOND,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange!

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow
Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago;
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost:
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy;
'Your old earth,' they say, 'is very dreary,
'Our young feet,' they say, 'are very weak;
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek:
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.'

'True,' say the children, 'it may happen
That we die before our time:
Little Alice died last year, her grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her:
Was no room for any work in the close clay!
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries;
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes:
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk-chime.
'It is good when it happens,' say the children,
'That we die before our time.'

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have:
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.

Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do;
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
But they answer, 'Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

'For oh,' say the children, 'we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap;
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring
Through the coal-dark, underground,
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

'For all day, the wheels are droning, turning;
Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places:
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling,
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling,
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.
And all day, the iron wheels are droning,
And sometimes we could pray,
'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning)
'Stop! be silent for to-day!'

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth!
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals:
Let them prove their living souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray;
So the blessed One who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.
They answer, 'Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door:
Is it likely God, with angels singing round him,
Hears our weeping any more?

'Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,
And at midnight's hour of harm,
'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.
We know no other words except 'Our Father,'
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand which is strong.

'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

'But, no!' say the children, weeping faster,
'He is speechless as a stone:
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.
Go to!' say the children,—'up in heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving:
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind.'
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you!
They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun.
They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm;
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm:
Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep! let them weep!

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.

'How long,' they say, 'how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path!
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath.'

A SONG FOR THE RAGGED SCHOOLS OF LONDON.

WRITTEN IN ROME.

I AM listening here in Rome.
'England's strong,' say many speakers,
'If she winks, the Czar must come,
Prow and topsail, to the breakers.'

'England's rich in coal and oak,'
Adds a Roman, getting moody,
'If she shakes a travelling cloak,
Down our Appian roll the scudi.'

'England's righteous,' they rejoin,
'Who shall grudge her exaltations,
When her wealth of golden coin
Works the welfare of the nations?'

I am listening here in Rome.
Over Alps a voice is sweeping—
'England's cruel! save us some
Of these victims in her keeping!'

As the cry beneath the wheel
Of an old triumphal Roman
Cleft the people's shouts like steel,
While the show was spoilt for no man,

Comes that voice. Let others shout,
Other poets praise my land here:
I am sadly sitting out,
Praying, 'God forgive her grandeur.'

Shall we boast of empire, where
Time with ruin sits commissioned?
In God's liberal blue air
Peter's dome itself looks wizened;

And the mountains, in disdain,
Gather back their lights of opal
From the dumb, despondent plain,
Heaped with jawbones of a people.

Lordly English, think it o'er,
Cæsar's doing is all undone!
You have cannons on your shore,
And free parliaments in London,

Princes' parks, and merchants' homes,
Tents for soldiers, ships for seamen,—
Ay, but ruins worse than Rome's
In your pauper men and women.

Women leering through the gas,
(Just such bosoms used to nurse you)
Men, turned wolves by famine—pass!
Those can speak themselves, and curse you.

But these others—children small,
Spilt like blots about the city,
Quay, and street, and palace-wall—
Take them up into your pity!

Ragged children with bare feet,
Whom the angels in white raiment
Know the names of, to repeat
When they come on you for payment.

Ragged children, hungry-eyed,
Huddled up out of the coldness
On your doorsteps, side by side,
Till your footman damns their boldness.

In the alleys, in the squares,
Begging, lying little rebels
In the noisy thoroughfares,
Struggling on with piteous trebles.

Patient children—think what pain
Makes a young child patient—ponder!
Wronged too commonly to strain
After right, or wish, or wonder.

Wicked children, with peaked chins,
And old foreheads! there are many
With no pleasures except sins,
Gambling with a stolen penny.

Sickly children, that whine low
To themselves and not their mothers,
From mere habit,—never so
Hoping help or care from others.

Healthy children, with those blue
English eyes, fresh from their Maker,
Fierce and ravenous, staring through
At the brown loaves of the baker.

I am listening here in Rome,
And the Romans are confessing,
'English children pass in bloom
All the prettiest made for blessing.

'*Angli angeli!*' (resumed
From the mediæval story)
'Such rose angelhoods, emplumed
In such ringlets of pure glory!'

Can we smooth down the bright hair,
O my sisters, calm, unthrilled in
Our hearts' pulses? Can we bear
The sweet looks of our own children,

While those others, lean and small,
Scurf and mildew of the city,
Spot our streets, convict us all
Till we take them into pity?

'Is it our fault?' you reply,
'When, throughout civilization,
Every nation's empery
Is asserted by starvation?

'All these mouths we cannot feed,
And we cannot clothe these bodies.'
Well, if man 's so hard indeed,
Let them learn at least what God is!

Little outcasts from life's fold,
The grave's hope they may be joined in,
By Christ's covenant consoled
For our social contract's grinding.

If no better can be done,
Let us do but this,—endeavour
That the sun behind the sun
Shine upon them while they shiver!

On the dismal London flags,
Through the cruel social juggle,
Put a thought beneath their rags
To ennoble the heart's struggle.

O my sisters! not so much
Are we asked for—not a blossom
From our children's nosegay, such
As we gave it from our bosom,—

Not the milk left in their cup,
Not the lamp while they are sleeping.
Not the little cloak hung up
While the coat 's in daily keeping,—

But a place in RAGGED SCHOOLS,
Where the outcasts may to-morrow
Learn by gentle words and rules
Just the uses of their sorrow.

O my sisters! children small,
Blue-eyed, wailing through the city—
Our own babes cry in them all,
Let us take them into pity!

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE.

A ROSE once grew within
A garden April-green,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate
On a tall bough and straight:
Early comer, early comer,
Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty gestes did win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

'For if I wait,' said she,
'Till time for roses be,
For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,
Maiden-blush and royal dusk-rose.

'What glory then for me
In such a company?—
Roses plenty, roses plenty,
And one nightingale for twenty!

'Nay, let me in,' said she
'Before the rest are free,
In my loneness, in my loneness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

'For I would lonely stand
Uplifting my white hand,
On a mission, on a mission,
To declare the coming vision.

'Upon which lifted sign,
What worship will be mine!
What addressing, what caressing,
And what thanks and praise and blessing!

'A windlike joy will rush
Through every tree and bush,
Bending softly in affection
And spontaneous benediction.

'Insects that only may
Live in a sunbright ray,
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
Shall be drawn as to a brightness,—

'And every moth and bee,
Approach me reverently,
Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,
Coronals of motioned glory.

'Three larks shall leave a cloud,
To my whiter beauty vowed,
Singing gladly all the moontide,
Never waiting for the suntide.

'Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me,
Singing sadly all the suntide,
Never waiting for the moontide.

'I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When below on earth they see me
With my starry aspect dreamy.

'And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors,
By their curtsies and sweet-smelling,
To give grace to my foretelling.'

So praying did she win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah,—alas for her!
No thing did minister
To her praises, to her praises,
More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen
To boast a perfect green,
Scarcely having, scarcely having
One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
Along the southern wall,
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting
Wings scarce long enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so,
With his nest down in the gorses,
And his song in the star-courses.

The nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas:
Guess him in the Happy islands,
Learning music from the silence!

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both,
Doing honour, doing honour
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down
As on a royal crown;
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the earth did seem
To waken from a dream,
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose, 'Ha, snow!
And art thou fallen so?
Thou, who wast enthronëd stately
All along my mountains lately?

'Holla, thou world-wide snow!
And art thou wasted so,
With a little bough to catch thee,
And a little bee to watch thee?'

—Poor Rose, to be misknown!
Would she had ne'er been blown,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
All the sadder for that oneness!

Some word she tried to say,
Some *no* . . . ah, wellaway!
But the passion did o'ercome her,
And the fair frail leaves dropped from her.

—Dropped from her, fair and mute,
Close to a poet's foot,
Who beheld them, smiling slowly,
As at something sad yet holy,—

Said, 'Verily and thus
'It chances too with *us*
Poets, singing sweetest snatches
While that deaf men keep the watches:

'Vaunting to come before
Our own age evermore,
In a loneness, in a loneness,
And the nobler for that oneness.

'Holy in voice and heart,
To high ends, set apart:
All unmated, all unmated,
Just because so consecrated.

'But if alone we be,
Where is our empery?
And if none can reach our stature,
Who can mete our lofty nature?

'What bell will yield a tone,
Swung in the air alone?
If no brazen clapper bringing,
Who can hear the chimëd ringing?

'What angel but would seem
To sensual eyes, ghost-dim?
And without assimilation,
Pain is inter-penetration.

'And thus, what can we do,
Poor rose and poet too,
Who both antedate our mission
In an unpreparëd season?

'Drop, leaf! be silent, song!
Cold things we come among:
We must warm them, we must warm them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

'Howbeit' (here his face
Lightened around the place,
So to mark the outward turning
Of its spirit's inward burning)

'Something it is, to hold
In God's worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature-duty,
Some new form of His mild Beauty.

'Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be, in mood or meadow,
The Chief Beauty's sign and shadow!

'Holy, in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,—
Though the world stand dumb around us,
All unable to expound us.

'Though none us deign to bless,
Blessëd are we, natheless;
Blessëd still and consecrated
In that, rose, we were created.

'Oh, shame to poet's lays
Sung for the dole of praise,—
Hoarsely sung upon the highway
With that *obolum da mihi*!

'Shame, shame to poet's soul
Pining for such a dole,
When Heaven-chosen to inherit
The high throne of a chief spirit!

'Sit still upon your thrones,
O ye poetic ones!
And if, sooth, the world decry you,
Let it pass unchallenged by you.

'Ye to yourselves suffice,
Without its flatteries.
Self-contentedly approve you
Unto HIM who sits above you,—

'In prayers, that upward mount
Like to a fair-sunned fount
Which, in gushing back upon you,
Hath an upper music won you,—

'In faith, that still perceives
No rose can shed her leaves,
Far less, poet fall from mission,
With an unfulfilled fruition,—

'In hope, that apprehends
An end beyond these ends,
And great uses rendered duly
By the meanest song sung truly,—

'In thanks, for all the good
By poets understood,
For the sound of seraphs moving
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

'For sights of things away
Through fissures of the clay,
Promised things which *shall* be given
And sung over, up in Heaven,—

'For life, so lovely vain,
For death, which breaks the chain,
For this sense of present sweetness,
And this yearning to completeness!'

WINE OF CYPRUS.

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, AUTHOR OF "SELECT PASSAGES FROM THE GREEK FATHERS," ETC.,

TO WHOM THESE STANZAS ARE ADDRESSED.

If old Bacchus were the speaker
He would tell you with a sigh,
Of the Cyprus in this beaker
I am sipping like a fly,—
Like a fly or gnat on Ida
At the hour of goblet-pledge,
By Queen Juno brushed aside,
Full white arm-sweep, from the edge.

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler
When the drink is so divine,
And some deep-mouthed Greek exemplar
Would become your Cyprus wine:
Cyclops' mouth might plunge aright in,
While his one eye over-leered,
Nor too large were mouth of Titan
Drinking rivers down his beard.

Pan might dip his head so deep in,
That his ears alone pricked out,
Fauns around him pressing, leaping,
Each one pointing to his throat:

While the Naiads, like Bacchantes,
Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
Cry, 'O earth, that thou wouldst grant us
Springs to keep, of such a taste!'

But for me, I am not worthy
After gods and Greeks to drink,
And my lips are pale and earthy
To go bathing from this brink:
Since you heard them speak the last time,
They have faded from their blooms,
And the laughter of my pastime
Has learnt silence at the tombs.

Ah, my friend! the antique drinkers
Crowned the cup and crowned the brow.
Can I answer the old thinkers
In the forms they thought of, now?
Who will fetch from garden-closes
Some new garlands while I speak,
That the forehead, crowned with roses,
May strike scarlet down the cheek?

Do not mock me! with my mortal,
Suits no wreath again, indeed;
I am sad-voiced as the turtle
Which Anacreon used to feed:
Yet as that same bird demurely
Wet her beak in cup of his,
So, without a garland, surely
I may touch the brim of this.

Go,—let others praise the Chian!
This is soft as Muses' string,
This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
This is rapid as his spring,
Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
Light as ever trod her feet;
And the brown bees of Hymettus
Make their honey not so sweet

Very copious are my praises,
Though I sip it like a fly!
Ah—but, sipping,—times and places
Change before me suddenly:
As Ulysses' old libation
Drew the ghosts from every part,
So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,
Stirs the Hades of my heart.

And I think of those long mornings
Which my thought goes far to seek,
When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek:
Past the pane the mountain spreading,
Swept the sheep's-bells tinkling noise,
While a girlish voice was reading,
Somewhat low for αις and οις.

Then, what golden hours were for us!
While we sat together there,
How the white vests of the chorus
Seemed to wave up a live air!

How the cothurns trod majestic
Down the deep iambic lines,
And the rolling anapæstic
Curled like vapour over shrines!

Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous,
How he drove the bolted breath
Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous
In the gnarlëd oak beneath!
Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,
Who was born to monarch's place,
And who made the whole world loyal,
Less by kingly power than grace!

Our Euripides, the human,
With his droppings of warm tears,
And his touches of things common
Till they rose to touch the spheres!
Our Theocritus, our Bion,
And our Pindar's shining goals!—
These were cup-bearers undying,
Of the wine that's meant for souls.

And my Plato, the divine one,
If men know the gods aright
By their motions as they shine on
With a glorious trail of light!
And your noble Christian bishops,
Who mouthed grandly the last Greek!
Though the sponges on their hyssops
Were distent with wine—too weak.

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised him
As a liberal mouth of gold;
And your Basil, you upraised him
To the height of speakers old:
And we both praised Heliodorus
For his secret of pure lies,—
Who forged first his linkëd stories
In the heat of lady's eyes.

And we both praised your Synesius
For the fire shot up his odes,
Though the Church was scarce propitious
As he whistled dogs and gods.
And we both praised Nazianzen
For the fervid heart and speech:
Only I eschewed his glancing
At the lyre hung out of reach.

Do you mind that deed of Atè
Which you bound me to so fast,—
Reading 'De Virginitate'
From the first line to the last?
How I said at ending, solemn
As I turned and looked at you,
That St. Simeon on the column
Had had somewhat less to do?

For we sometimes gently wrangled,
Very gently, be it said,
Since our thoughts were disentangled
By no breaking of the thread:

And I charged you with extortions
On the nobler fames of old—
Ay, and sometimes thought your Porsons
Stained the purple they would fold.

For the rest—a mystic moaning,
Kept Cassandra at the gate,
With wild eyes the vision shone in,
And wide nostrils scenting fate.
And Prometheus, bound in passion
By brute Force to the blind stone,
Showed us looks of invocation
Turned to ocean and the sun.

And Medea we saw burning
At her nature's planted stake :
And proud Œdipus fate-scorning
While the cloud came on to break—
While the cloud came on slow, slower,
Till he stood discrowned, resigned,—
But the reader's voice dropped lower
When the poet called him BLIND.

Ah, my gossip ! you were older,
And more learned, and a man ;
Yet that shadow, the enfolder
Of your quiet eyelids, ran
Both our spirits to one level :
And I turned from hill and lea
And the summer-sun's green revel,
To your eyes that could not see.

Now Christ bless you with the one light
  Which goes shining night and day!
May the flowers which grow in sunlight
  Shed their fragrance in your way!
Is it not right to remember
  All your kindness, friend of mine,
When we two sat in the chamber,
  And the poets poured us wine?

So, to come back to the drinking
  Of this Cyprus,—it is well,
But those memories, to my thinking,
  Make a better œnomel;
And whoever be the speaker,
  None can murmur with a sigh
That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
  I am sipping like a fly.

THE CYCLOPS.

(THEOCRITUS, Idyll XI).

AND so an easier life our Cyclops drew,
The ancient Polyphemus, who in youth
Loved Galatea while the manhood grew
Adown his cheeks and darkened round his mouth.
No jot he cared for apples, olives, roses;
Love made him mad: the whole world was neglected,
The very sheep went backward to their closes
From out the fair green pastures, self-directed.
And singing Galatea, thus, he wore
The sunrise down along the weedy shore,
And pined alone, and felt the cruel wound
Beneath his heart, which Cypris' arrow bore,
With a deep pang; but, so, the cure was found;
And sitting on a lofty rock he cast
His eyes upon the sea, and sang at last:—

'O whitest Galatea, can it be
That thou shouldst spurn me off who love thee so?
More white than curds, my girl, thou art to see,
More meek than lambs, more full of leaping glee
Than kids, and brighter than the early glow

On grapes that swell to ripen,—sour like thee!
Thou comest to me with the fragrant sleep,
  And with the fragrant sleep thou goest from me;
Thou fliest . . fliest, as a frightened sheep
  Flies the grey wolf!—yet Love did overcome me,
So long;—I loved thee, maiden, first of all
  When down the hills (my mother fast beside thee)
I saw thee stray to pluck the summer-fall
  Of hyacinth bells, and went myself to guide thee:
And since my eyes have seen thee, they can leave thee
  No more, from that day's light! But thou . . by Zeus,
Thou wilt not care for *that*, to let it grieve thee!
  I know thee, fair one, why thou springest loose
From my arm round thee. Why? I tell thee, Dear!
  One shaggy eyebrow draws its smudging road
Straight through my ample front, from ear to ear,—
  One eye rolls underneath; and yawning, broad
Flat nostrils feel the bulging lips too near.
Yet . . ho, ho!—*I*,—whatever I appear,—
  Do feed a thousand oxen! When I have done,
I milk the cows, and drink the milk that's best!
  I lack no cheese, while summer keeps the sun;
And after, in the cold, it 's ready prest!
  And then, I know to sing, as there is none
Of all the Cyclops can, . . a song of thee,
Sweet apple of my soul, on love's fair tree,
And of myself who love thee . . till the west
Forgets the light, and all but I have rest.
I feed for thee, besides, eleven fair does,
  And all in fawn; and four tame whelps of bears.
Come to me, Sweet! thou shalt have all of those
  In change for love! I will not halve the shares.

Leave the blue sea, with pure white arms extended
To the dry shore; and, in my cave's recess,
Thou shalt be gladder for the noonlight ended,—
For here be laurels, spiral cypresses,
Dark ivy, and a vine whose leaves enfold
Most luscious grapes; and here is water cold,
The wooded Ætna pours down through the trees
From the white snows,—which gods were scarce too bold
To drink in turn with nectar. Who with these
Would choose the salt wave of the lukewarm seas?
Nay, look on me! If I am hairy and rough,
I have an oak's heart in me; there's a fire
In these grey ashes which burns hot enough;
And when I burn for *thee*, I grudge the pyre
No fuel . . not my soul, nor this one eye,—
Most precious thing I have, because thereby
I see thee, Fairest! Out, alas! I wish
My mother had borne me finnëd like a fish,
That I might plunge down in the ocean near thee,
And kiss thy glittering hand between the weeds,
If still thy face were turned; and I would bear thee
Each lily white, and poppy fair that bleeds
Its red heart down its leaves!—one gift, for hours
Of summer,—one, for winter; since, to cheer thee,
I could not bring at once all kinds of flowers.
Even now, girl, now, I fain would learn to swim,
If stranger in a ship sailed nigh, I wis,—
That I may know how sweet a thing it is
To live down with you, in the deep and dim!
Come up, O Galatea, from the ocean,
And having come, forget again to go!
As I, who sing out here my heart's emotion,
Could sit for ever. Come up from below!

Come, keep my flocks beside me, milk my kine,—
  Come, press my cheese, distrain my whey and curd!
Ah, mother! she alone . . that mother of mine . .
  Did wrong me sore! I blame her!—Not a word
Of kindly intercession did she address
Thine ear with for my sake; and ne'ertheless
  She saw me wasting, wasting, day by day;
  Both head and feet were aching, I will say,
All sick for grief, as I myself was sick.
  O Cyclops, Cyclops, whither hast thou sent
  Thy soul on fluttering wings? If thou wert bent
On turning bowls, or pulling green and thick
  The sprouts to give thy lambkins,—thou wouldst make thee
  A wiser Cyclops than for what we take thee.
Milk dry the present! Why pursue too quick
That future which is fugitive aright?
  Thy Galatea thou shalt haply find,—
  Or else a maiden fairer and more kind,
For many girls do call me through the night,
  And, as they call, do laugh out silverly.
  I, too, am something in the world, I see!'

While thus the Cyclops love and lambs did fold,
Ease came with song, he could not buy with gold.

SONG OF THE ROSE.

ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO: FROM ACHILLES TATIUS.

If Zeus chose us a king of the flowers in his mirth,
He would call to the rose and would royally crown it;
For the rose, ho, the rose! is the grace of the earth,
Is the light of the plants that are growing upon it:
For the rose, ho, the rose! is the eye of the flowers,
Is the blush of the meadows that feel themselves fair,
Is the lightning of beauty that strikes through the bowers
On pale lovers who sit in the glow unaware.
Ho, the rose breathes of love! ho, the rose lifts the cup
To the red lips of Cypris invoked for a guest!
Ho, the rose, having curled its sweet leaves for the world,
Takes delight in the motion its petals keep up,
As they laugh to the wind as it laughs from the west!

ANACREON'S ODE TO THE SWALLOW.

Thou indeed, little Swallow
A sweet yearly comer,
Art building a hollow
New nest every summer,
And straight dost depart
Where no gazing can follow,
Past Memphis, down Nile!
Ah, but Love all the while
Builds his nest in my heart,
Through the cold winter-weeks:
And as one Love takes flight,
Comes another, O Swallow,
In an egg warm and white,
And another is callow!
And the large gaping beaks
Chirp all day and all night:
And the Loves who are older
Help the young and the poor Loves,
And the young Loves grown bolder
Increase by the score Loves—
Why, what can be done?
If a noise comes from one,
Can I bear all this rout of a hundred and more Loves?

THE DEAD PAN.

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Can ye listen in your silence?
Can your mystic voices tell us
Where ye hide? In floating islands,
With a wind that evermore
Keeps you out of sight of shore?
Pan, Pan is dead.

In what revels are ye sunken,
In old Æthiopia?
Have the Pygmies made you drunken,
Bathing in mandragora
Your divine pale lips, that shiver
Like the lotus in the river?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
In gigantic Alpine rows?
The black poppies out of number
Nodding, dripping from your brows
To the red lees of your wine,
And so kept alive and fine?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Or lie crushed your stagnant corses
Where the silver spheres roll on,
Stung to life by centric forces
Thrown like rays out from the sun?—
While the smoke of your old altars
Is the shroud that round you welters?
Great Pan is dead.

'Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,'
Said the old Hellenic tongue,—
Said the hero-oaths, as well as
Poets' songs the sweetest sung:
Have ye grown deaf in a day?
Can ye speak not yea or nay,
Since Pan is dead?

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
All alone, O Naiades,
While your drenchëd locks dry slow in
This cold feeble sun and breeze?
Not a word the Naiads say,
Though the rivers run for aye;
For Pan is dead.

From the gloaming of the oak-wood,
O ye Dryads, could ye flee?
At the rushing thunderstroke, would
No sob tremble though the tree?
Not a word the Dryads say,
Though the forests wave for aye;
For Pan is dead.

Have ye left the mountain places,
Oreads wild, for other tryst?
Shall we see no sudden faces
Strike a glory through the mist?
Not a sound the silence thrills
Of the everlasting hills:
Pan, Pan is dead.

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
Crowned to starry wanderings,
With your chariots in procession,
And your silver clash of wings!
Very pale ye seem to rise,
Ghosts of Grecian deities,
Now Pan is dead!

Jove, that right hand is unloaded,
Whence the thunder did prevail,
While in idiocy of godhead
Thou art staring the stars pale!
And thine eagle, blind and old,
Roughs his feathers in the cold.
Pan, Pan is dead,

Where, O Juno, is the glory
Of thy regal look and tread?
Will they lay, for evermore, thee,
On thy dim, straight, golden bed?
Will thy queendom all lie hid
Meekly under either lid?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Ha, Apollo! floats his golden
Hair all mist-like where he stands,
While the Muses hang enfolding
Knee and foot with faint wild hands?
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
Niobe looked lost as thou!
Pan, Pan is dead.

Shall the casque with its brown iron,
Pallas' broad blue eyes, eclipse,
And no hero take inspiring
From the god-Greek of her lips?
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
Mars the mighty, cursing it?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther
He swoons, bound with his own vines;
And his Mænads slowly saunter,
Head aside, among the pines,
While they murmur dreamingly,
'Evohe—ah—evohe—!'
Ah, Pan is dead!

Neptune lies beside the trident,
Dull and senseless as a stone;
And old Pluto deaf and silent
Is cast out into the sun:
Ceres smileth stern thereat,
'We *all* now are desolate
Now Pan is dead.'

Aphrodite! dead and driven
As thy native foam, thou art;
With the cestus long done heaving
On the white calm of thine heart!
Ai Adonis! at that shriek,
Not a tear runs down her cheek—
Pan, Pan is dead.

And the Loves, we used to know from
One another, huddled lie,
Frore as taken in a snow-storm,
Close beside her tenderly;
As if each had weakly tried
Once to kiss her as he died.
Pan, Pan is dead.

What, and Hermes? Time enthralleth
All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,
And the ivy blindly crawleth
Round thy brave caduceus?
Hast thou no new message for us,
Full of thunder and Jove-glories?
Nay, Pan is dead.

Crownëd Cybele's great turret
Rocks and crumbles on her head;
Roar the lions of her chariot
Toward the wilderness, unfed:
Scornful children are not mute,—
'Mother, mother, walk afoot
Since Pan is dead!'

In the fiery-hearted centre
Of the solemn universe,
Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
To consume thee with this curse?
Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,
O thou palsied Mystery!
For Pan is dead.

Gods, we vainly do adjure you,—
Ye return nor voice nor sign!
Not a votary could secure you
Even a grave for your Divine:
Not a grave, to show thereby,
Here these grey old gods do lie.
Pan, Pan is dead.

Even that Greece who took your wages,
Calls the obolus outworn;
And the hoarse deep-throated ages
Laugh your godships unto scorn:
And the poets do disclaim you,
Or grow colder if they name you—
And Pan is dead.

Gods bereavëd, gods belated,
With your purples rent asunder!
Gods discrowned and desecrated,
Disinherited of thunder!
Now, the goats may climb and crop
The soft grass on Ida's top—
Now, Pan is dead.

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
When a cry more loud than wind,
Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward,
From the pilëd Dark behind;
And the sun shrank and grew pale,
Breathed against by the great wail—
'Pan, Pan is dead.'

And the rowers from the benches
Fell, each shuddering on his face,
While departing Influences
Struck a cold back through the place;
And the shadow of the ship
Reeled along the passive deep—
'Pan, Pan is dead.'

And that dismal cry rose slowly
And sank slowly through the air,
Full of spirit's melancholy
And eternity's despair!
And they heard the words it said—
PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD—
PAN, PAN IS DEAD.

'Twas the hour when One in Sion
Hung for love's sake on a cross;
When His brow was chill with dying,
And His soul was faint with loss;
When His priestly blood dropped downward,
And His kingly eyes looked throneward—
Then, Pan was dead

By the love He stood alone in,
His sole Godhead rose complete,
And the false gods fell down moaning,
Each from off his golden seat;
All the false gods with a cry
Rendered up their deity—
Pan, Pan was dead.

Wailing wide across the islands,
They rent, vest-like, their Divine;
And a darkness and a silence
Quenched the light of every shrine;
And Dodona's oak swang lonely
Henceforth, to the tempest only:
Pan, Pan was dead.

Pythia staggered, feeling o'er her
Her lost god's forsaking look;
Straight her eyeballs filmed with horror,
And her crispy fillets shook,
And her lips gasped through their foam,
For a word that did not come.
Pan, Pan was dead.

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
Ye are silent evermore!
And I dash down this old chalice
Whence libations ran of yore.
See, the wine crawls in the dust
Wormlike—as your glories must,
Since Pan is dead.

Get to dust, as common mortals,
By a common doom and track!
Let no Schiller from the portals
Of that Hades call you back,
Or instruct us to weep all
At your antique funeral.
Pan, Pan is dead.

By your beauty, which confesses
Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
By our grand heroic guesses
Through your falsehood at the True,—
We will weep *not!* earth shall roll
Heir to each god's aureole—
And Pan is dead.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
Sung beside her in her youth,
And those debonair romances
Sound but dull beside the truth.
Phœbus' chariot-course is run:
Look up, poets, to the sun!
Pan, Pan is dead.

Christ hath sent us down the angels;
And the whole earth and the skies
Are illumed by altar-candles
Lit for blessëd mysteries;
And a Priest's hand through creation
Waveth calm and consecration:
And Pan is dead.

Truth is fair: should we forego it?
Can we sigh right for a wrong?
God himself is the best Poet,
And the Real is His song.
Sing His truth out fair and full,
And secure His beautiful.
Let Pan be dead.

Truth is large: our aspiration
Scarce embraces half we be.
Shame, to stand in His creation
And doubt truth's sufficiency!—
To think God's song unexcelling
The poor tales of our own telling—
When Pan is dead!

What is true and just and honest,
What is lovely, what is pure,
All of praise that hath admonisht,
All of virtue, shall endure;
These are themes for poet's uses,
Stirring nobler than the Muses,
Ere Pan was dead.

O brave poets, keep back nothing,
Nor mix falsehood with the whole;
Look up Godward; speak the truth in
Worthy song from earnest soul:
Hold, in high poetic duty,
Truest Truth the fairest Beauty!
Pan, Pan is dead.

SONNETS.

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

With stammering lips and insufficient sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night,
With dream and thought and feeling interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground.
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air:
But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

PERPLEXED MUSIC.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E. J.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand,
Whence harmonies we cannot understand,
Of God's will in His worlds, the strain unfolds
In sad, perplexëd minors: deathly colds
Fall on us while we hear, and countermand
Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land
With nightingales in visionary wolds.
We murmur, 'Where is any certain tune
Or measured music in such notes as these?'
But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
Are not so minded; their fine ear hath won
The issue of completed cadences,
And, smiling down the stars, they whisper—SWEET.

WORK.

WHAT are we set on earth for? Say, to toil;
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines
For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,
And Death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
God did anoint thee with His odorous oil,
To wrestle, not to reign; and He assigns
All thy tears over, like pure crystallines,
For younger fellow-workers of the soil
To wear for amulets. So others shall
Take patience, labour, to their heart and hand,
From thy hand and thy heart and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
The least flower, with a brimming cup may stand,
And share its dew-drop with another near.

PAIN IN PLEASURE.

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon mine heart,
And drew around it other thoughts like bees
For multitude and thirst of sweetnesses;
Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf and mart
Could lure those insect swarms from orange-trees,
That I might hive with me such thoughts and please
My soul so, always. Foolish counterpart
Of a weak man's vain wishes! While I spoke,
The thought I called a flower grew nettle-rough,
The thoughts, called bees, stung me to festering:
Oh, entertain (cried Reason as she woke,)
Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough,
And they will all prove sad enough to sting!

FLUSH OR FAUNUS.

YOU see this dog; it was but yesterday
I mused forgetful of his presence here
Till thought on thought drew downward tear on tear:
When from the pillow where wet-cheeked I lay,
A head as hairy as Faunus thrust its way
Right sudden against my face, two golden-clear
Great eyes astonished mine, a drooping ear
Did flap me on either cheek to dry the spray!
I started first as some Arcadian
Amazed by goatly god in twilight grove,
But as the bearded vision closelier ran
My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose above
Surprise and sadness,—thanking the true PAN
Who by low creatures leads to heights of love.

FINITE AND INFINITE.

THE wind sounds only in opposing straits,
The sea, beside the shore; man's spirit rends
Its quiet only up against the ends
Of wants and oppositions, loves and hates,
Where, worked and worn by passionate debates,
And losing by the loss it apprehends,
The flesh rocks round and every breath it sends
Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured states
Suppose a straitened place. Jehovah Lord,
Make room for rest, around me! out of sight
Now float me, of the vexing land abhorred,
Till in deep calms of space my soul may right
Her nature, shoot large sail on lengthening cord,
And rush exultant on the Infinite.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A DESIRE.

THOU large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
Self-called George Sand! whose soul, amid the lions
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can:
I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
Above the applauded circus, in appliance
Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,
Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,
From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place
With holier light! that thou to woman's claim
And man's, might'st join beside the angel's grace
Of a pure genius sanctified from blame,
Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A RECOGNITION.

TRUE genius, but true woman! dost deny
The woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds and armlets worn
By weaker women in captivity?
Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn,—
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
Disproving thy man's name: and while before
The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,
We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and higher,
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly shore
Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire!

LIFE.

EACH creature holds an insular point in space;
Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes a sound,
But all the multitudinous beings round,
In all the countless worlds with time and place
For their conditions, down to the central base,
Thrill, haply, in vibration and rebound,
Life answering life across the vast profound,
In full antiphony, by a common grace?
I think this sudden joyaunce which illumes
A child's mouth sleeping, unaware may run
From some soul newly loosened from earth's tombs:
I think this passionate sigh, which half-begun
I stifle back, may reach and stir the plumes
Of God's calm angel standing in the sun.

QUESTION AND ANSWER.

Love you seek for, presupposes
Summer heat and sunny glow.
Tell me, do you find moss-roses
Budding, blooming in the snow?
Snow might kill the rose-tree's root—
Shake it quickly from your foot,
Lest it harm you as you go.

From the ivy where it dapples
A grey ruin, stone by stone,
Do you look for grapes or apples,
Or for sad green leaves alone?
Pluck the leaves off, two or three—
Keep them for morality
When you shall be safe and gone.

INCLUSIONS.

Oh, wilt thou have my hand, Dear, to lie along in thine?
As a little stone in a running stream, it seems to lie and pine.
Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear, unfit to plight with thine.

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, Dear, drawn closer to thine own?
My cheek is white, my cheek is worn, by many a tear run down.
Now leave a little space, Dear, lest it should wet thine own.

Oh, must thou have my soul, Dear, commingled with thy soul?—
Red grows the cheek, and warm the hand; the part is in the whole:
Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate, when soul is joined to soul.

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE.

I.

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young:
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery, while I strove,—
'Guess now who holds thee?'—'Death,' I said. But, there,
The silver answer rang,—'Not Death, but Love.'

II.

But only three in all God's universe
Have heard this word thou hast said,—Himself, beside
Thee speaking, and me listening! and replied
One of us . . . *that* was God, . . . and laid the curse
So darkly on my eyelids, as to amerce
My sight from seeing thee,—that if I had died,
The death-weights, placed there, would have signified
Less absolute exclusion. 'Nay' is worse
From God than from all others, O my friend!
Men could not part us with their worldly jars,
Nor the seas change us, nor the tempests bend;
Our hands would touch for all the mountain-bars:
And, heaven being rolled between us at the end,
We should but vow the faster for the stars.

III.

Unlike are we, unlike, O princely Heart!
Unlike our uses and our destinies.
Our ministering two angels look surprise
On one another, as they strike athwart
Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art
A guest for queens to social pageantries,
With gages from a hundred brighter eyes
Than tears even can make mine, to play thy part
Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer, singing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree?
The chrism is on thine head,—on mine, the dew,—
And Death must dig the level where these agree.

IV.

THOU hast thy calling to some palace-floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems! where
The dancers will break footing, from the care
Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor
For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear
To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my door?
Look up and see the casement broken in,
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
Hush, call no echo up in further proof
Of desolation! there's a voice within
That weeps . . . as thou must sing . . . alone, aloof

V.

I LIFT my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And, looking in thine eyes, I overturn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn
Through the ashen greyness. If thy foot in scorn
Could tread them out to darkness utterly,
It might be well perhaps. But if instead
Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow
The grey dust up, . . . those laurels on thine head,
O my Belovëd, will not shield thee so,
That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred
The hair beneath. Stand further off then! go.

VI.

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I forbore—
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream include thee, as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

VII.

The face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
The names of country, heaven, are changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;
And this . . . this lute and song . . . loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only dear
Because thy name moves right in what they say.

VIII.

WHAT can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, who hast brought the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstained, untold,
And laid them on the outside of the wall
For such as I to take or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? am I cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?
Not so; not cold,—but very poor instead.
Ask God who knows. For frequent tears have run
The colours from my life, and left so dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done
To give the same as pillow to thy head.
Go farther! let it serve to trample on.

IX.

CAN it be right to give what I can give?
To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears
As salt as mine, and hear the sighing years
Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
Through those infrequent smiles which fail to live
For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
That this can scarce be right! We are not peers
So to be lovers; and I own, and grieve,
That givers of such gifts as mine are, must
Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!
I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
Nor give thee any love—which were unjust.
Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

X.

YET, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed
And worthy of acceptation. Fire is bright,
Let temple burn, or flax; an equal light
Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or weed:
And love is fire. And when I say at need
I love thee . . . mark! . . . *I love thee*—in thy sight
I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
With conscience of the new rays that proceed
Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low
In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures
Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
And what I *feel*, across the inferior features
Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XI.

AND therefore if to love can be desert,
I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale
As these you see, and trembling knees that fail
To bear the burden of a heavy heart,—
This weary minstrel-life that once was girt
To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
To pipe now 'gainst the valley nightingale
A melancholy music,—why advert
To these things? O Belovëd, it is plain
I am not of thy worth nor for thy place!
And yet, because I love thee, I obtain
From that same love this vindicating grace,
To live on still in love, and yet in vain,—
To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.

XII.

INDEED this very love which is my boast,
And which, when rising up from breast to brow,
Doth crown me with a ruby large enow
To draw men's eyes and prove the inner cost,—
This love even, all my worth, to the uttermost,
I should not love withal, unless that thou
Hadst set me an example, shown me how,
When first thine earnest eyes with mine were crossed,
And love called love. And thus, I cannot speak
Of love even, as a good thing of my own:
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and weak,
And placed it by thee on a golden throne,—
And that I love (O soul, we must be meek!)
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII.

AND wilt thou have me fashion into speech
The love I bear thee, finding words enough,
And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough,
Between our faces, to cast light on each?—
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
My hand to hold my spirit so far off
From myself—me—that I should bring thee proof
In words, of love hid in me out of reach.
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—
Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,
And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

XIV.

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
'I love her for her smile—her look—her way
Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day'—
For these things in themselves, Belovëd, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.

XV.

Accuse me not, beseech thee, that I wear
Too calm and sad a face in front of thine;
For we two look two ways, and cannot shine
With the same sunlight on our brow and hair.
On me thou lookest with no doubting care,
As on a bee shut in a crystalline;
Since sorrow hath shut me safe in love's divine,
And to spread wing and fly in the outer air
Were most impossible failure, if I strove
To fail so. But I look on thee—on thee—
Beholding, besides love, the end of love,
Hearing oblivion beyond memory;
As one who sits and gazes from above,
Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI.

And yet, because thou overcomest so,
Because thou art more noble and like a king,
Thou canst prevail against my fears and fling
Thy purple round me, till my heart shall grow
Too close against thine heart henceforth to know
How it shook when alone. Why, conquering
May prove as lordly and complete a thing
In lifting upward, as in crushing low!
And as a vanquished soldier yields his sword
To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,
Even so, Belovëd, I at last record,
Here ends my strife. If *thou* invite me forth,
I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

XVII.

My poet, thou canst touch on all the notes
God set between His After and Before,
And strike up and strike off the general roar
Of the rushing worlds a melody that floats
In a serene air purely. Antidotes
Of medicated music, answering for
Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour
From thence into their ears. God's will devotes
Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine.
How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use?
A hope, to sing by gladly? or a fine
Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?
A shade, in which to sing—of palm or pine?
A grave, on which to rest from singing? Choose.

XVIII.

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away
To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully
I ring out to the full brown length and say
'Take it.' My day of youth went yesterday;
My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee,
Nor plant I it from rose- or myrtle-tree,
As girls do, any more: it only may
Now shade on two pale cheeks the mark of tears,
Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside
Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral-shears
Would take this first, but Love is justified,—
Take it thou,—finding pure, from all those years,
The kiss my mother left here when she died.

XIX.

THE soul's Rialto hath its merchandize;
I barter curl for curl upon that mart,
And from my poet's forehead to my heart
Receive this lock which outweighs argosies,—
As purply black, as erst to Pindar's eyes
The dim purpureal tresses gloomed athwart
The nine white Muse-brows. For this counterpart, . . .
The bay-crown's shade, Belovëd, I surmise,
Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black!
Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing breath,
I tie the shadows safe from gliding back,
And lay the gift where nothing hindereth;
Here on my heart, as on thy brow, to lack
No natural heat till mine grows cold in death.

XX.

BELOVËD, my Belovëd, when I think
That thou wast in the world a year ago,
What time I sat alone here in the snow
And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink
No moment at thy voice, but, link by link,
Went counting all my chains as if that so
They never could fall off at any blow
Struck by thy possible hand,—why, thus I drink
Of life's great cup of wonder! Wonderful,
Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
With personal act or speech,—nor ever cull
Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white
Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,
Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

XXI.

SAY over again, and yet once over again,
That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
Should seem 'a cuckoo-song,' as thou dost treat it.
Remember, never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed.
Belovëd, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain
Cry, 'Speak once more—thou lovest!' Who can fear
Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll,
Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year?
Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,
To love me also in silence with thy soul.

XXII.

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curvëd point,—what bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,
The angels would press on us and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, Belovëd,—where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

XXIII.

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
Wouldst thou miss any life in losing mine?
And would the sun for thee more coldly shine
Because of grave-damps falling round my head?
I marvelled, my Belovëd, when I read
Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—
But . . *so* much to thee? Can I pour thy wine
While my hands tremble? Then my soul, instead
Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower range.
Then, love me, Love! look on me—breathe on me!
As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
For love, to give up acres and degree,
I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange
My near sweet view of heaven, for earth with thee!

XXIV.

LET the world's sharpness like a clasping knife
Shut in upon itself and do no harm
In this close hand of Love, now soft and warm,
And let us hear no sound of human strife
After the click of the shutting. Life to life—
I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,
And feel as safe as guarded by a charm
Against the stab of worldlings, who if rife
Are weak to injure. Very whitely still
The lilies of our lives may reassure
Their blossoms from their roots, accessible
Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer;
Growing straight, out of man's reach, on the hill.
God only, who made us rich, can make us poor.

XXV.

A HEAVY heart, Belovëd, have I borne
From year to year until I saw thy face,
And sorrow after sorrow took the place
Of all those natural joys as lightly worn
As the stringed pearls, each lifted in its turn
By a beating heart at dance-time. Hopes apace
Were changed to long despairs, till God's own grace
Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn
My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst bid me bring
And let it drop adown thy calmly great
Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a thing
Which its own nature does precipitate,
While thine doth close above it, mediating
Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished fate.

XXVI.

I LIVED with visions for my company
Instead of men and women, years ago,
And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
A sweeter music than they played to me.
But soon their trailing purple was not free
Of this world's dust, their lutes did silent grow,
And I myself grew faint and blind below
Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come—to be,
Belovëd, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,
Their songs, their splendours, (better, yet the same,
As river-water hallowed into fonts)
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
My soul with satisfaction of all wants:
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

XXVII.

MY own Belovëd, who hast lifted me
From this drear flat of earth where I was thrown,
And, in betwixt the languid ringlets, blown
A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully
Shines out again, as all the angels see,
Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,
Who camest to me when the world was gone,
And I who looked for only God, found *thee!*
I find thee; I am safe, and strong, and glad.
As one who stands in dewless asphodel,
Looks backward on the tedious time he had
In the upper life,—so I, with bosom-swell,
Make witness, here, between the good and bad,
That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves as well.

XXVIII.

My letters! all dead paper, mute and white!
And yet they seem alive and quivering
Against my tremulous hands which loose the string
And let them drop down on my knee to-night.
This said,—he wished to have me in his sight
Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in spring
To come and touch my hand . . . a simple thing,
Yet I wept for it!—this, . . . the paper's light . . .
Said, *Dear I love thee;* and I sank and quailed
As if God's future thundered on my past.
This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has paled
With lying at my heart that beat too fast.
And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill availed
If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

XXIX.

I THINK of thee!—my thoughts do twine and bud
About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,
Put out broad leaves, and soon there's nought to see
Except the straggling green which hides the wood.
Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood
I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
Who art dearer, better! Rather, instantly
Renew thy presence; as a strong tree should,
Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,
And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee,
Drop heavily down,—burst, shattered, everywhere!
Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee
And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
I do not think of thee—I am too near thee

XXX.

I SEE thine image through my tears to-night,
And yet to-day I saw thee smiling. How
Refer the cause?—Belovëd, is it thou
Or I, who makes me sad? The acolyte
Amid the chanted joy and thankful rite
May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,
On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and vow,
Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art out of sight,
As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's amen.
Belovëd, dost thou love? or did I see all
The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when
Too vehement light dilated my ideal,
For my soul's eyes? Will that light come again,
As now these tears come—falling hot and real?

XXXI.

THOU comest! all is said without a word.
I sit beneath thy looks, as children do
In the noon-sun, with souls that tremble through
Their happy eyelids from an unaverred
Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold, I erred
In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue
The sin most, but the occasion—that we two
Should for a moment stand unministered
By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near and close,
Thou dove-like help! and, when my fears would rise,
With thy broad heart serenely interpose:
Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies
These thoughts which tremble when bereft of those,
Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

XXXII.

THE first time that the sun rose on thine oath
To love me, I looked forward to the moon
To slacken all those bonds which seemed too soon
And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly loathe;
And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
For such man's love!—more like an out-of-tune
Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth
To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste,
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains may float
'Neath master-hands, from instruments defaced,—
And great souls, at one stroke, may do and doat.

XXXIII.

YES, call me by my pet-name! let me hear
The name I used to run at, when a child,
From innocent play, and leave the cowslips piled,
To glance up in some face that proved me dear
With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear
Fond voices which, being drawn and reconciled
Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,
Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
While I call God—call God!—So let thy mouth
Be heir to those who are now exanimate.
Gather the north flowers to complete the south,
And catch the early love up in the late.
Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in truth,
With the same heart, will answer and not wait.

XXXIV.

With the same heart, I said, I'll answer thee
As those, when thou shalt call me by my name—
Lo, the vain promise! is the same, the same,
Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy?
When called before, I told how hastily
I dropped my flowers or brake off from a game,
To run and answer with the smile that came
At play last moment, and went on with me
Through my obedience. When I answer now,
I drop a grave thought, break from solitude;
Yet still my heart goes to thee—ponder how—
Not as to a single good, but all my good!
Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow
That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

XXXV.

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
And be all to me? Shall I never miss
Home-talk and blessing and the common kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,
When I look up, to drop on a new range
Of walls and floors, another home than this?
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?
That's hardest. If to conquer love, has tried,
To conquer grief, tries more, as all things prove.
For grief indeed is love and grief beside.
Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love.
Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,
And fold within, the wet wings of thy dove.

XXXVI.

WHEN we met first and loved, I did not build
Upon the event with marble. Could it mean
To last, a love set pendulous between
Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather thrilled,
Distrusting every light that seemed to gild
The onward path, and feared to overlean
A finger even. And, though I have grown serene
And strong since then, I think that God has willed
A still renewable fear . . . O love, O troth . . .
Lest these enclaspëd hands should never hold,
This mutual kiss drop down between us both
As an unowned thing, once the lips being cold.
And Love, be false! if *he*, to keep one oath,
Must lose one joy, by his life's star foretold.

XXXVII.

PARDON, oh, pardon, that my soul should make
Of all that strong divineness which I know
For thine and thee, an image only so
Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and break.
It is that distant years which did not take
Thy sovranty, recoiling with a blow,
Have forced my swimming brain to undergo
Their doubt and dread, and blindly to forsake
Thy purity of likeness and distort
Thy worthiest love to a worthless counterfeit.
As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,
His guardian sea-god to commemorate,
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills a-snort
And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

XXXVIII.

First time he kissed me, he but only kissed
The fingers of this hand wherewith I write;
And ever since, it grew more clean and white,
Slow to world-greetings, quick with its 'Oh, list,'
When the angels speak. A ring of amethyst
I could not wear here, plainer to my sight,
Than that first kiss. The second passed in height
The first, and sought the forehead, and half missed,
Half falling on the hair. O beyond meed!
That was the chrism of love, which love's own crown,
With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.
The third upon my lips was folded down
In perfect, purple state; since when, indeed,
I have been proud and said, 'My love, my own.'

XXXIX.

Because thou hast the power and own'st the grace
To look through and behind this mask of me,
(Against which, years have beat thus blanchingly
With their rains,) and behold my soul's true face,
The dim and weary witness of life's race,—
Because thou hast the faith and love to see,
Through that same soul's distracting lethargy,
The patient angel waiting for a place
In the new Heavens,—because nor sin nor woe,
Nor God's infliction, nor death's neighbourhood,
Nor all which others viewing, turn to go,
Nor all which makes me tired of all, self-viewed,—
Nothing repels thee, . . . Dearest, teach me so
To pour out gratitude, as thou dost, good!

XL.

Oh, yes! they love through all this world of ours!
I will not gainsay love, called love forsooth:
I have heard love talked in my early youth,
And since, not so long back but that the flowers
Then gathered, smell still. Mussulmans and Giaours
Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no ruth
For any weeping. Polypheme's white tooth
Slips on the nut if, after frequent showers,
The shell is over-smooth,—and not so much
Will turn the thing called love, aside to hate
Or else to oblivion. But thou art not such
A lover, my Belovëd! thou canst wait
Through sorrow and sickness, to bring souls to touch
And think it soon when others cry 'Too late.'

XLI.

I thank all who have loved me in their hearts,
With thanks and love from mine. Deep thanks to all
Who paused a little near the prison-wall
To hear my music in its louder parts
Ere they went onward, each one to the mart's
Or temple's occupation, beyond call.
But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall
When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
Own instrument didst drop down at thy foot
To harken what I said between my tears, . . .
Instruct me how to thank thee! Oh, to shoot
My soul's full meaning into future years,
That *they* should lend it utterance, and salute
Love that endures, from Life that disappears!

XLII.

'*My future will not copy fair my past*'—
I wrote that once; and thinking at my side
My ministering life-angel justified
The word by his appealing look upcast
To the white throne of God, I turned at last,
And there, instead, saw thee, not unallied
To angels in thy soul! Then I, long tried
By natural ills, received the comfort fast,
While budding, at thy sight, my pilgrim's staff
Gave out green leaves with morning dews impearled.
I seek no copy now of life's first half:
Leave here the pages with long musing curled,
And write me new my future's epigraph,
New angel mine, unhoped for in the world!

XLIII.

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

XLIV.

Belovëd, thou hast brought me many flowers
Plucked in the garden, all the summer through
And winter, and it seemed as if they grew
In this close room, nor missed the sun and showers.
So, in the like name of that love of ours,
Take back these thoughts which here unfolded too,
And which on warm and cold days I withdrew
From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds and bowers
Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
And wait thy weeding; yet here 's eglantine,
Here 's ivy!—take them, as I used to do
Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall not pine.
Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours true,
And tell thy soul, their roots are left in mine.

CALLS ON THE HEART.

FREE Heart, that singest to-day
Like a bird on the first green spray,
Wilt thou go forth to the world
Where the hawk hath his wing unfurled
To follow, perhaps, thy way?
Where the tamer thine own will bind,
And, to make thee sing, will blind,
While the little hip grows for the free behind?
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
'Free hearts are better so.'

The world, thou hast heard it told,
Has counted its robber-gold,
And the pieces stick to the hand;
The world goes riding it fair and grand,
While the truth is bought and sold;
World-voices east, world-voices west,
They call thee, Heart, from thine early rest,
'Come hither, come hither and be our guest.'
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
'Good hearts are calmer so.'

Who calleth thee, Heart? World's Strife,
With a golden heft to his knife;
World's Mirth, with a finger fine
That draws on a board in wine
Her blood-red plans of life;
World's Gain, with a brow knit down;
World's Fame, with a laurel crown
Which rustles most as the leaves turn brown:
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
'Calm hearts are wiser so.'

Hast heard that Proserpina
(Once fooling) was snatched away
To partake the dark king's seat,
And the tears ran fast on her feet
To think how the sun shone yesterday?
With her ankles sunken in asphodel
She wept for the roses of earth which fell
From her lap when the wild car drave to hell.
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
'Wise hearts are warmer so.'

And what is this place not seen,
Where Hearts may hide serene?
''Tis a fair still house well-kept,
'Which humble thoughts have swept,
'And holy prayers made clean.
'There, I sit with Love in the sun,
'And we two never have done

'Singing sweeter songs than are guessed by *one*.'
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
'Warm hearts are fuller so.'

O Heart, O Love,—I fear
That Love may be kept too near.
Hast heard, O Heart, that tale,
How Love may be false and frail
To a Heart once holden dear?
—'But this true Love of mine
'Clings fast as the clinging vine,
'And mingles pure as the grapes in wine.'
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
'Full hearts beat higher so.'

O Heart, O Love, beware!
Look up, and boast not there,
For who has twirled at the pin?
'Tis the World, between Death and Sin,—
The World and the World's Despair!
And Death has quickened his pace
To the hearth, with a mocking face,
Familiar as Love, in Love's own place.
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'Still, no!
'High hearts must grieve even so.'

The house is waste to-day,—
The leaf has dropt from the spray,
The thorn, prickt through to the song:
If summer doeth no wrong

The winter will, they say.
Sing, Heart! what heart replies?
In vain we were calm and wise,
If the tears unkissed stand on in our eyes.
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'Ah, no!
'Grieved hearts must break even so.'

Howbeit all is not lost.
The warm noon ends in frost,
And worldly tongues of promise,
Like sheep-bells die off from us
On the desert hills cloud-crossed:
Yet through the silence shall
Pierce the death-angel's call,
And 'Come up hither,' recover all.
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'I go!
'Broken hearts triumph so.'

CONFESSIONS.

FACE to face in my chamber, my silent chamber, I saw her:
God and she and I only, there I sat down to draw her
Soul through the clefts of confession,—'Speak, I am holding thee fast,
As the angel of resurrection shall do it at the last!'
'My cup is blood-red
With my sin,' she said,
'And I pour it out to the bitter lees,
As if the angels of judgment stood over me strong at the last
Or as thou wert as these.'

When God smote His hands together, and struck out thy soul as a spark
Into the organized glory of things, from deeps of the dark,—
Say, didst thou shine, didst thou burn, didst thou honour the power in the form,
As the star does at night, or the fire-fly, or even the little ground-worm?
'I have sinned,' she said,
'For my seed-light shed

Has smouldered away from His first decrees.
The cypress praiseth the fire-fly, the ground-leaf praiseth the worm;
I am viler than these.'

When God on that sin had pity, and did not trample thee straight
With His wild rains beating and drenching thy light found inadequate;
When He only sent thee the north-wind, a little searching and chill,
To quicken thy flame—didst thou kindle and flash to the heights of His will?
'I have sinned,' she said,
'Unquickened, unspread
My fire dropt down, and I wept on my knees:
I only said of His winds of the north as I shrank from their chill,
What delight is in these?'

When God on that sin had pity, and did not meet it as such,
But tempered the wind to thy uses, and softened the world to thy touch,
At least thou wast moved in thy soul, though unable to prove it afar,
Thou couldst carry thy light like a jewel, not giving it out like a star?
'I have sinned,' she said,
'And not merited

The gift He gives, by the grace He sees!
The mine-cave praiseth the jewel, the hill-side praiseth the star;
I am viler than these.'

Then I cried aloud in my passion,—'Unthankful and impotent creature,
To throw up thy scorn unto God through the rents in thy beggarly nature!
If He, the all-giving and loving, is served so unduly, what then
Hast thou done to the weak and the false and the changing,—thy fellows of men?'
'I have *loved*,' she said,
(Words bowing her head
As the wind the wet acacia-trees,)
'I saw God sitting above me, but I . . . I sat among men,
And I have loved these.'

Again with a lifted voice, like a choral trumpet that takes
The lowest note of a viol that trembles, and triumphing breaks
On the air with it solemn and clear,—'Behold! I have sinned not in this!
Where I loved, I have loved much and well,—I have verily loved not amiss.
Let the living,' she said,
'Inquire of the dead,

In the house of the pale-fronted images:
My own true dead will answer for me, that I have not loved amiss
In my love for all these.

'The least touch of their hands in the morning, I keep it by day and by night;
Their least step on the stair, at the door, still throbs through me, if ever so light;
Their least gift, which they left to my childhood, far off in the long-ago years,
Is now turned from a toy to a relic, and seen through the crystals of tears.
Dig the snow,' she said,
'For my churchyard bed,
Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear to freeze,
If one only of these my belovëds, shall love me with heart-warm tears,
As I have loved these!

'If I angered any among them, from thenceforth my own life was sore;
If I fell by chance from their presence, I clung to their memory more:
Their tender I often felt holy, their bitter I sometimes called sweet;
And whenever their heart has refused me, I fell down straight at their feet.
I have loved,' she said,—
'Man is weak, God is dread,

Yet the weak man dies with his spirit at ease,
Having poured such an unguent of love but once on the
Saviour's feet,
As I lavished for these.'

'Go,' I cried, 'thou hast chosen the Human, and left the
Divine!
Then, at least, have the Human shared with thee their
wild berry-wine?
Have they loved back thy love, and when strangers
approached thee with blame,
Have they covered thy fault with their kisses, and loved
thee the same?'
But she shrunk and said,
'God, over my head,
Must sweep in the wrath of His judgment-seas,
If *He* shall deal with me sinning, but only indeed the
same
And no gentler than these.'

A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS.

Love me, Sweet, with all thou art,
Feeling, thinking, seeing;
Love me in the lightest part,
Love me in full being.

Love me with thine open youth
In its frank surrender;
With the vowing of thy mouth,
With its silence tender.

Love me with thine azure eyes,
Made for earnest granting;
Taking colour from the skies,
Can Heaven's truth be wanting?

Love me with their lids, that fall
Snow-like at first meeting;
Love me with thine heart, that all
Neighbours then see beating.

Love me with thine hand stretched out
Freely—open-minded:
Love me with thy loitering foot,—
Hearing one behind it.

Love me with thy voice, that turns
Sudden faint above me;
Love me with thy blush that burns
When I murmur, *Love me!*

Love me with thy thinking soul,
Break it to love-sighing;
Love me with thy thoughts that roll
On through living—dying.

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,
When the world has crowned thee;
Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,
With the angels round thee.

Love me pure, as musers do,
Up the woodlands shady;
Love me gaily, fast and true,
As a winsome lady.

Through all hopes that keep us brave,
Further off or nigher,
Love me for the house and grave,
And for something higher.

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, Dear,
Woman's love no fable,
I will love *thee*—half a year—
As a man is able.

THE LADY'S YES.

'YES,' I answered you last night;
'No,' this morning, sir, I say:
Colours seen by candle-light
Will not look the same by day.

When the viols played their best,
Lamps above and laughs below,
Love me sounded like a jest,
Fit for *yes* or fit for *no*.

Call me false or call me free,
Vow, whatever light may shine,—
No man on your face shall see
Any grief for change on mine.

Yet the sin is on us both;
Time to dance is not to woo;
Wooing light makes fickle troth,
Scorn of *me* recoils on *you*.

Learn to win a lady's faith
Nobly as the thing is high,
Bravely, as for life and death,
With a loyal gravity.

Lead her from the festive boards,
  Point her to the starry skies;
Guard her, by your truthful words,
  Pure from courtship's flatteries.

By your truth she shall be true,
  Ever true, as wives of yore;
And her *yes*, once said to you,
  SHALL be Yes for evermore.

MAY'S LOVE.

You love all, you say,
  Round, beneath, above me :
Find me then some way
  Better than to love me,
Me, too, dearest May !

O world-kissing eyes
  Which the blue heavens melt to !
I, sad, overwise,
  Loathe the sweet looks dealt to
All things—men and flies.

You love all, you say :
  Therefore, Dear, abate me
Just your love, I pray !
  Shut your eyes and hate me—
Only *me*—fair May !

AMY'S CRUELTY.

Fair Amy of the terraced house,
Assist me to discover
Why you who would not hurt a mouse
Can torture so your lover.

You give your coffee to the cat,
You stroke the dog for coming,
And all your face grows kinder at
The little brown bee's humming.

But when *he* haunts your door . . the town
Marks coming and marks going . .
You seem to have stitched your eyelids down
To that long piece of sewing !

You never give a look, not you,
Nor drop him a 'Good-morning,'
To keep his long day warm and blue,
So fretted by your scorning.

She shook her head—'The mouse and bee
For crumb or flower will linger :
The dog is happy at my knee,
The cat purrs at my finger.

'But *he* . . to *him*, the least thing given
Means great things at a distance ;
He wants my world, my sun, my heaven,
Soul, body, whole existence.

'They say love gives as well as takes;
But I'm a simple maiden,—
My mother's first smile when she wakes
I still have smiled and prayed in.

'I only know my mother's love
Which gives all and asks nothing;
And this new loving sets the groove
Too much the way of loathing.

'Unless he gives me all in change,
I forfeit all things by him:
The risk is terrible and strange—
I tremble, doubt, . . deny him.

'He's sweetest friend, or hardest foe,
Best angel, or worst devil;
I either hate or . . love him so,
I can't be merely civil!

'You trust a woman who puts forth,
Her blossoms thick as summer's?
You think she dreams what love is worth,
Who casts it to new-comers?

'Such love 's a cowslip-ball to fling,
A moment's pretty pastime;
I give . . all me, if anything,
The first time and the last time.

'Dear neighbour of the trellised house,
A man should murmur never,
Though treated worse than dog and mouse,
Till doted on for ever!'

MY KATE.

She was not as pretty as women I know,
And yet all your best made of sunshine and snow
Drop to shade, melt to nought in the long-trodden ways,
While she 's still remembered on warm and cold days—
My Kate

Her air had a meaning, her movements a grace ;
You turned from the fairest to gaze on her face :
And when you had once seen her forehead and mouth,
You saw as distinctly her soul and her truth—
My Kate.

Such a blue inner light from her eyelids outbroke,
You looked at her silence and fancied she spoke :
When she did, so peculiar yet soft was the tone,
Though the loudest spoke also, you heard her alone—
My Kate.

I doubt if she said to you much that could act
As a thought or suggestion : she did not attract
In the sense of the brilliant or wise : I infer
'Twas her thinking of others, made you think of her—
My Kate.

She never found fault with you, never implied
Your wrong by her right; and yet men at her side
Grew nobler, girls purer, as through the whole town
The children were gladder that pulled at her gown—
My Kate.

None knelt at her feet confessed lovers in thrall;
They knelt more to God than they used,—that was all;
If you praised her as charming, some asked what you meant,
But the charm of her presence was felt when she went—
My Kate.

The weak and the gentle, the ribald and rude,
She took as she found them, and did them all good;
It always was so with her: see what you have!
She has made the grass greener even here . . with her grave—
My Kate.

My dear one!—when thou wast alive with the rest,
I held thee the sweetest and loved thee the best:
And now thou art dead, shall I not take thy part
As thy smiles used to do for thyself, my sweet Heart—
My Kate?

A FALSE STEP.

SWEET, thou hast trod on a heart.
Pass! there's a world full of men
And women as fair as thou art
Must do such things now and then.

Thou only hast stepped unaware,—
Malice, not one can impute;
And why should a heart have been there
In the way of a fair woman's foot?

It was not a stone that could trip,
Nor was it a thorn that could rend:
Put up thy proud underlip!
'Twas merely the heart of a friend.

And yet peradventure one day
Thou, sitting alone at the glass,
Remarking the bloom gone away,
Where the smile in its dimplement was,

And seeking around thee in vain
From hundreds who flattered before,
Such a word as, 'Oh, not in the main
Do I hold thee less precious, but more!'

Thou'lt sigh, very like, on thy part,
'Of all I have known or can know,
I wish I had only that Heart
I trod upon ages ago!'

THE MASK.

I HAVE a smiling face, she said,
I have a jest for all I meet,
I have a garland for my head
And all its flowers are sweet,—
And so you call me gay, she said.

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,
And Wrong did teach this jesting bold;
These flowers were plucked from garden-bed
While a death-chime was tolled:
And what now will you say? she said.

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,
Live captives so uncomforted
As souls behind a smile.
God's pity let us pray, she said

I know my face is bright, she said,—
Such brightness dying suns diffuse:
I bear upon my forehead shed
The sign of what I lose,
The ending of my day, she said.

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
And take a moan upon my mouth,
And tie a cypress round my head,
And let my tears run smooth,
It were the happier way, she said.

And since that must not be, she said,
I fain your bitter world would leave.
How calmly, calmly, smile the dead,
Who do not, therefore, grieve!
The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

But in your bitter world, she said,
Face-joy 's a costly mask to wear;
'Tis bought with pangs long nourishëd,
And rounded to despair:
Grief's earnest makes life's play, she said.

Ye weep for those who weep? she said—
Ah fools! I bid you pass them by.
Go, weep for those whose hearts have bled
What time their eyes were dry.
Whom sadder can I say? she said.

A YEAR'S SPINNING.

He listened at the porch that day,
To hear the wheel go on, and on;
And then it stopped, ran back away,
While through the door he brought the sun
But now my spinning is all done.

He sat beside me, with an oath
That love ne'er ended, once begun:
I smiled—believing for us both,
What was the truth for only one.
And now my spinning is all done.

My mother cursed me that I heard
A young man's wooing as I spun:
Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,—
For I have, since, a harder known!
And now my spinning is all done.

I thought—O God!—my first-born's cry
Both voices to mine ear would drown:
I listened in mine agony—
It was the *silence* made me groan!
And now my spinning is all done.

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave
(Who cursed me on her death-bed lone)
And my dead baby's (God it save !)
Who, not to bless me, would not moan.
And now my spinning is all done.

A stone upon my heart and head,
But no name written on the stone !
Sweet neighbours, whisper low instead.
'This sinner was a loving one—
And now her spinning is all done.'

And let the door ajar remain,
In case he should pass by anon ;
And leave the wheel out very plain,—
That HE, when passing in the sun,
May see the spinning is all done.

CHANGE UPON CHANGE.

FIVE months ago, the stream did flow,
The lilies bloomed within the sedge,
And we were lingering to and fro,
Where none will track thee in this snow,
Along the stream, beside the hedge.
Ah, Sweet, be free to love and go!
For if I do not hear thy foot,
The frozen river is as mute,
The flowers have dried down to the root:
And why, since these be changed since May,
Shouldst *thou* change less than *they?*

And slow, slow as the winter snow,
The tears have drifted to mine eyes;
And my poor cheeks, five months ago
Set blushing at thy praises so,
Put paleness on for a disguise.
Ah, Sweet, be free to praise and go!
For if my face is turned too pale,
It was thine oath that first did fail,—
It was thy love proved false and frail:
And why, since these be changed enow,
Should *I* change less than *thou?*

THAT DAY.

I STAND by the river where both of us stood,
And there is but one shadow to darken the flood;
And the path leading to it, where both used to pass,
Has the step but of one, to take dew from the grass,—
One forlorn since that day.

The flowers of the margin are many to see;
None stoops at my bidding to pluck them for me.
The bird in the alder sings loudly and long,—
My low sound of weeping disturbs not his song,
As thy vow did, that day.

I stand by the river, I think of the vow;
Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker, be thou!
I leave the flower growing, the bird unreproved;
Would I trouble *thee* rather than *them*, my beloved,—
And my lover that day?

Go, be sure of my love, by that treason forgiven;
Of my prayers, by the blessings they win thee from Heaven;
Of my grief—(guess the length of the sword by the sheath's)
By the silence of life, more pathetic than death's!
Go,—be clear of that day!

VOID IN LAW.

Sleep, little babe, on my knee,
Sleep, for the midnight is chill,
And the moon has died out in the tree,
And the great human world goeth ill.
Sleep, for the wicked agree:
Sleep, let them do as they will.
Sleep.

Sleep, thou hast drawn from my breast
The last drop of milk that was good;
And now, in a dream, suck the rest,
Lest the real should trouble thy blood.
Suck, little lips dispossessed,
As we kiss in the air whom we would.
Sleep.

O lips of thy father! the same,
So like! Very deeply they swore
When he gave me his ring and his name,
To take back, I imagined, no more!
And now is all changed like a game,
Though the old cards are used as of yore?
Sleep.

'Void in law,' said the courts. Something wrong
In the forms? Yet, 'Till death part us two,
I, James, take thee, Jessie,' was strong,
And ONE witness competent. True
Such a marriage was worth an old song,
Heard in Heaven, though, as plain as the New.
Sleep.

Sleep, little child, his and mine!
Her throat has the antelope curve,
And her cheek just the colour and line
Which fade not before him nor swerve:
Yet *she* has no child!—the divine
Seal of right upon loves that deserve.
Sleep.

My child! though the world take her part,
Saying, 'She was the woman to choose,
He had eyes, was a man in his heart,'—
We twain the decision refuse:
We . . . weak as I am, as thou art, . . .
Cling on to him, never to loose.
Sleep.

He thinks that, when done with this place,
All's ended? he'll new-stamp the ore?
Yes, Cæsar's—but not in our case.
Let him learn we are waiting before
The grave's mouth, the Heaven's gate, God's face,
With implacable love evermore.
Sleep.

He 's ours, though he kissed her but now;
He 's ours, though she kissed in reply
He's ours, though himself disavow,
And God's universe favour the lie;
Ours to claim, ours to clasp, ours below,
Ours above, . . . if we live. if we die.
Sleep.

Ah baby, my baby, too rough
Is my lullaby? What have I said?
Sleep! When I've wept long enough
I shall learn to weep softly instead,
And piece with some alien stuff
My heart to lie smooth for thy head.
Sleep.

Two souls met upon thee, my sweet;
Two loves led thee out to the sun:
Alas, pretty hands, pretty feet,
If the one who remains (only one)
Set her grief at thee, turned in a heat
To thine enemy,—were it well done?
Sleep.

May He of the manger stand near
And love thee! An infant He came
To His own who rejected Him here,
But the Magi brought gifts all the same.
I hurry the cross on my Dear!
My gifts are the griefs I declaim!
Sleep.

MY HEART AND I.

Enough ! we 're tired, my heart and I.
We sit beside the headstone thus,
And wish that name were carved for us.
The moss reprints more tenderly
The hard types of the mason's knife,
As Heaven's sweet life renews earth's life
With which we 're tired, my heart and I.

You see we 're tired, my heart and I.
We dealt with books, we trusted men,
And in our own blood drenched the pen,
As if such colours could not fly.
We walked too straight for fortune's end,
We loved too true to keep a friend ;
At last we 're tired, my heart and I.

How tired we feel, my heart and I !
We seem of no use in the world ;
Our fancies hang grey and uncurled
About men's eyes indifferently ;
Our voice which thrilled you so, will let
You sleep ; our tears are only wet :
What do we here, my heart and I ?

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!
It was not thus in that old time
When Ralph sat with me 'neath the lime
To watch the sunset from the sky.
'Dear love, you're looking tired,' he said
I, smiling at him, shook my head:
'Tis now we're tired, my heart and I.

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!
Though now none takes me on his arm
To fold me close and kiss me warm
Till each quick breath end in a sigh
Of happy languor. Now, alone,
We lean upon this graveyard stone,
Uncheered, unkissed, my heart and I.

Tired out we are, my heart and I.
Suppose the world brought diadems
To tempt us, crusted with loose gems
Of powers and pleasures? Let it try.
We scarcely care to look at even
A pretty child, or God's blue heaven,
We feel so tired, my heart and I.

Yet who complains? My heart and I?
In this abundant earth no doubt
Is little room for things worn out:
Disdain them, break them, throw them by!
And if before the days grew rough
We *once* were loved, used,—well enough,
I think, we've fared, my heart and I.

THE BEST THING IN THE WORLD.

WHAT 's the best thing in the world?
June-rose, by May-dew impearled;
Sweet south-wind, that means no rain;
Truth, not cruel to a friend;
Pleasure, not in haste to end;
Beauty, not self-decked and curled
Till its pride is over-plain;
Light, that never makes you wink;
Memory, that gives no pain;
Love, when, *so*, you're loved again.
What's the best thing in the world?
—Something out of it, I think.

'DIED . . .

(*The 'Times' Obituary.*)

WHAT shall we add now? He is dead.
And I who praise and you who blame,
With wash of words across his name,
Find suddenly declared instead—
'*On Sunday, third of August, dead.*'

Which stops the whole we talked to-day.
I, quickened to a plausive glance
At his large general tolerance
By common people's narrow way,
Stopped short in praising. Dead, they say.

And you, who had just put in a sort
Of cold deduction—'rather, large
Through weakness of the continent marge,
Than greatness of the thing contained'—
Broke off. Dead!—there, you stood restrained.

As if we had talked in following one
Up some long gallery. 'Would you choose
An air like that? The gait is loose—
Or noble.' Sudden in the sun
An oubliette winks. Where *is* he? Gone.

Dead. Man's 'I was' by God's 'I am'—
All hero-worship comes to that.
High heart, high thought, high fame, as flat
As a gravestone. Bring your *Jacet jam*—
The epitaph 's an epigram.

Dead. There 's an answer to arrest
All carping. Dust 's his natural place?
He'll let the flies buzz round his face
And, though you slander, not protest?
—From such an one, exact the Best?

Opinions gold or brass are null.
We chuck our flattery or abuse,
Called Cæsar's due, as Charon's dues,
I' the teeth of some dead sage or fool,
To mend the grinning of a skull.

Be abstinent in praise or blame.
The man 's still mortal, who stands first,
And mortal only, if last and worst.
Then slowly lift so frail a fame,
Or softly drop so poor a shame.

ONLY A CURL.

FRIENDS, of faces unknown and a land
  Unvisited over the sea,
Who tell me how lonely you stand
With a single gold curl in the hand
  Held up to be looked at by me,—

While you ask me to ponder and say
  What a father and mother can do,
With the bright fellow-locks put away
Out of reach, beyond kiss, in the clay
  Where the violets press nearer than you.

Shall I speak like a poet, or run
  Into weak woman's tears for relief?
Oh, children!—I never lost one,—
Yet my arm 's round my own little son,
  And Love knows the secret of Grief.

And I feel what it must be and is,
  When God draws a new angel so
Through the house of a man up to His,
With a murmur of music, you miss,
  And a rapture of light, you forego.

How you think, staring on at the door,
Where the face of your angel flashed in,
That its brightness, familiar before,
Burns off from you ever the more
For the dark of your sorrow and sin.

'God lent him and takes him,' you sigh
—Nay, there let me break with your pain:
God 's generous in giving, say I,—
And the thing which He gives, I deny
That He ever can take back again.

He gives what He gives. I appeal
To all who bear babes—in the hour
When the veil of the body we feel
Rent round us,—while torments reveal
The motherhood's advent in power,

And the babe cries!—has each of us known
By apocalypse (God being there
Full in nature) the child is our own,
Life of life, love of love, moan of moan,
Through all changes, all times, everywhere.

He 's ours and for ever. Believe,
O father!—O mother, look back
To the first love's assurance. To give
Means with God not to tempt or deceive
With a cup thrust in Benjamin's sack.

He gives what He gives. Be content!
He resumes nothing given,—be sure!
God lend? Where the usurers lent
In His temple, indignant He went
And scourged away all those impure.

He lends not; but gives to the end,
As He loves to the end. If it seem
That He draws back a gift, comprehend
'Tis to add to it rather,—amend,
And finish it up to your dream,—

Or keep,—as a mother will toys
Too costly, though given by herself,
Till the room shall be stiller from noise,
And the children more fit for such joys,
Kept over their heads on the shelf.

So look up, friends! you, who indeed
Have possessed in your house a sweet piece
Of the Heaven which men strive for, must need
Be more earnest than others are,—speed
Where they loiter, persist where they cease.

You know how one angel smiles there.
Then weep not. 'Tis easy for you
To be drawn by a single gold hair
Of that curl, from earth's storm and despair,
To the safe place above us. Adieu.

A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE.

A. A. E. C.

BORN, JULY 1848. DIED, NOVEMBER 1849.

OF English blood, of Tuscan birth,
What country should we give her?
Instead of any on the earth,
The civic Heavens receive her.

And here among the English tombs
In Tuscan ground we lay her,
While the blue Tuscan sky endomes
Our English words of prayer.

A little child!—how long she lived,
By months, not years, is reckoned:
Born in one July, she survived
Alone to see a second.

Bright-featured, as the July sun
Her little face still played in,
And splendours, with her birth begun,
Had had no time for fading.

So, LILY, from those July hours,
No wonder we should call her;
She looked such kinship to the flowers,
Was but a little taller.

A Tuscan Lily,—only white,
As Dante, in abhorrence
Of red corruption, wished aright
The lilies of his Florence.

We could not wish her whiter,—her
Who perfumed with pure blossom
The house—a lovely thing to wear
Upon a mother's bosom!

This July creature thought perhaps
Our speech not worth assuming;
She sat upon her parents' laps
And mimicked the gnat's humming;

Said 'father,' 'mother'—then left off,
For tongues celestial, fitter:
Her hair had grown just long enough
To catch Heaven's jasper-glitter.

Babes! Love could always hear and see
Behind the cloud that hid them.
'Let little children come to Me,
And do not thou forbid them.'

So, unforbidding, have we met,
And gently here have laid her,
Though winter is no time to get
The flowers that should o'erspread her:

We should bring pansies quick with spring,
Rose, violet, daffodilly,
And also, above everything,
White lilies for our Lily.

Nay, more than flowers, this grave exacts,—
Glad, grateful attestations
Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,
With calm renunciations.

Her very mother with light feet
Should leave the place too earthy,
Saying, 'The angels have thee, Sweet,
Because we are not worthy.'

But winter kills the orange-buds,
The gardens in the frost are,
And all the heart dissolves in floods,
Remembering we have lost her.

Poor earth, poor heart,—too weak, too weak
To miss the July shining!
Poor heart!—what bitter words we speak
When God speaks of resigning!

Sustain this heart in us that faints,
Thou God, the self-existent!
We catch up wild at parting saints,
And feel Thy heaven too distant.

The wind that swept them out of sin,
Has ruffled all our vesture:
On the shut door that let them in,
We beat with frantic gesture,—

'To us, us also, open straight!
The outer life is chilly;
Are *we* too, like the earth, to wait
Till next year for our Lily?'

—Oh, my own baby on my knees,
My leaping, dimpled treasure.
At every word I write like these,
Clasped close with stronger pressure

Too well my own heart understands,—
At every word beats fuller—
My little feet, my little hands,
And hair of Lily's colour!

But God gives patience, Love learns strength
And Faith remembers promise,
And Hope itself can smile at length
On other hopes gone from us.

Love, strong as Death, shall conquer Death,
Through struggle, made more glorious:
This mother stills her sobbing breath,
Renouncing yet victorious.

Arms, empty of her child, she lifts
With spirit unbereaven,—
'God will not all take back His gifts;
My Lily's mine in Heaven.

'Still mine! maternal rights serene
Not given to another!
The crystal bars shine faint between
The souls of child and mother.

'Meanwhile,' the mother cries, 'content!
Our love was well divided:
Its sweetness following where she went,
Its anguish stayed where I did.

'Well done of God, to halve the lot,
And give her all the sweetness;
To us, the empty room and cot,—
To her, the Heaven's completeness.

'To us, this grave,—to her, the rows
The mystic palm-trees spring in;
To us, the silence in the house,—
To her, the choral singing.

'For her, to gladden in God's view,—
For us, to hope and bear on.
Grow, Lily, in thy garden new,
Beside the Rose of Sharon!

'Grow fast in Heaven, sweet Lily clipped,
In love more calm than this is,
And may the angels dewy-lipped
Remind thee of our kisses!

'While none shall tell thee of our tears,
These human tears now falling,
Till, after a few patient years,
One home shall take us all in—

'Child, father, mother—who, left out?
Not mother, and not father!
And when, our dying couch about,
The natural mists shall gather,

'Some smiling angel close shall stand
In old Correggio's fashion,
And bear a LILY in his hand,
For death's ANNUNCIATION.'

LITTLE MATTIE.

DEAD! Thirteen a month ago!
  Short and narrow her life's walk
Lover's love she could not know
  Even by a dream or talk:
Too young to be glad of youth,
  Missing honour, labour, rest,
And the warmth of a babe's mouth
  At the blossom of her breast.
Must you pity her for this
And for all the loss it is,
You, her mother, with wet face,
Having had all in your case?

Just so young but yesternight,
  Now she is as old as death.
Meek, obedient in your sight,
  Gentle to a beck or breath
Only on last Monday! Yours,
  Answering you like silver bells
Lightly touched! An hour matures:
  You can teach her nothing else.
She has seen the mystery hid
Under Egypt's pyramid:
By those eyelids pale and close
Now she knows what Rhamses knows

Cross her quiet hands, and smooth
  Down her patient locks of silk,
Cold and passive as in truth
  You your fingers in spilt milk
Drew along a marble floor;
  But her lips you cannot wring
Into saying a word more,
  'Yes,' or 'No,' or such a thing:
Though you call and beg and wreak
Half your soul out in a shriek,
She will lie there in default
And most innocent revolt.

Ay, and if she spoke, may be
  She would answer like the Son,
'What is now 'twixt thee and me?'
  Dreadful answer! better none.
Yours on Monday, God's to-day!
  Yours, your child, your blood, your heart.
Called . . you called her, did you say,
  'Little Mattie' for your part?
Now already it sounds strange,
And you wonder, in this change,
What He calls His angel-creature,
Higher up than you can reach her.

'Twas a green and easy world
  As she took it; room to play,
(Though one's hair might get uncurled
  At the far end of the day).
What she suffered she shook off
  In the sunshine; what she sinned
She could pray on high enough
  To keep safe above the wind.

If reproved by God or you,
'Twas to better her, she knew ;
And if crossed, she gathered still
'Twas to cross out something ill.

You, you had the right, you thought,
To survey her with sweet scorn,
Poor gay child, who had not caught
Yet the octave-stretch forlorn
Of your larger wisdom ! Nay,
Now your places are changed so,
In that same superior way
She regards you dull and low
As you did herself exempt
From life's sorrows. Grand contempt
Of the spirits risen awhile,
Who look back with such a smile !

There's the sting of 't. That, I think,
Hurts the most a thousandfold.
To feel sudden, at a wink,
Some dear child we used to scold,
Praise, love both ways, kiss and tease,
Teach and tumble as our own,
All its curls about our knees,
Rise up suddenly full-grown.
Who could wonder such a sight
Made a woman mad outright ?
Show me Michael with the sword
Rather than such angels, Lord !

NAPOLEON III. IN ITALY.

EMPEROR, Emperor!
From the centre to the shore,
  From the Seine back to the Rhine,
Stood eight millions up and swore
  By their manhood's right divine
So to elect and legislate,
  This man should renew the line
Broken in a strain of fate
And leagued kings at Waterloo,
When the people's hands let go.
    Emperor
    Evermore.

With a universal shout
They took the old regalia out
From an open grave that day;
  From a grave that would not close,
Where the first Napoleon lay
  Expectant, in repose,
As still as Merlin, with his conquering face
  Turned up in its unquenchable appeal
To men and heroes of the advancing race,—
  Prepared to set the seal
Of what has been on what shall be.
    Emperor
    Evermore.

The thinkers stood aside
To let the nation act.
Some hated the new-constituted fact
Of empire, as pride treading on their pride.
Some quailed, lest what was poisonous in the past
Should graft itself in that Druidic bough
On this green Now.
Some cursed, because at last
The open heavens to which they had look'd in vain
For many a golden fall of marvellous rain
Were closed in brass; and some
Wept on because a gone thing could not come;
And some were silent, doubting all things for
That popular conviction,—evermore
Emperor.

That day I did not hate
Nor doubt, nor quail nor curse.
I, reverencing the people, did not bate
My reverence of their deed and oracle,
Nor vainly prate
Of better and of worse
Against the great conclusion of their will.
And yet, O voice and verse,
Which God set in me to acclaim and sing
Conviction, exaltation, aspiration,
We gave no music to the patent thing,
Nor spared a holy rhythm to throb and swim
About the name of him
Translated to the sphere of domination
By democratic passion!
I was not used, at least,

Nor can be, now or then,
To stroke the ermine beast
On any kind of throne,
(Though builded by a nation for its own),
And swell the surging choir for kings of men—
'Emperor
Evermore.'

But now, Napoleon, now
That, leaving far behind the purple throng
Of vulgar monarchs, thou
Tread'st higher in thy deed
Than stair of throne can lead,
To help in the hour of wrong
The broken hearts of nations to be strong,—
Now, lifted as thou art
To the level of pure song,
We stand to meet thee on these Alpine snows!
And while the palpitating peaks break out
Ecstatic from somnambular repose
With answers to the presence and the shout,
We, poets of the people, who take part
With elemental justice, natural right,
Join in our echoes also, nor refrain.
We meet thee, O Napoleon, at this height
At last, and find thee great enough to praise.
Receive the poet's chrism, which smells beyond
The priest's, and pass thy ways;—
An English poet warns thee to maintain
God's word, not England's:—let His truth be true,
And all men liars! with His truth respond
To all men's lie. Exalt the sword and smite

On that long anvil of the Apennine
Where Austria forged the Italian chain in view
Of seven consenting nations, sparks of fine
  Admonitory light,
Till men's eyes wink before convictions new.
Flash in God's justice to the world's amaze,
Sublime Deliverer!—after many days
Found worthy of the deed thou art come to do—
    Emperor
    Evermore.

But Italy, my Italy,
  Can it last, this gleam?
Can she live and be strong,
  Or is it another dream
Like the rest we have dreamed so long?
And shall it, must it be,
That after the battle-cloud has broken
  She will die off again
  Like the rain,
Or like a poet's song
  Sung of her, sad at the end
Because her name is Italy,—
  Die and count no friend?
Is it true,—may it be spoken,—
  That she who has lain so still,
With a wound in her breast,
And a flower in her hand,
And a grave-stone under her head,
  While every nation at will
Beside her has dared to stand,
And flout her with pity and scorn,

Saying, 'She is at rest,
She is fair, she is dead,
And, leaving room in her stead
To Us who are later born,
This is certainly best!'
Saying, 'Alas, she is fair,
Very fair, but dead,—give place,
And so we have room for the race.'
—Can it be true, be true,
That she lives anew?
That she rises up at the shout of her sons,
At the trumpet of France,
And lives anew?—is it true
That she has not moved in a trance,
As in Forty-eight?
When her eyes were troubled with blood
Till she knew not friend from foe,
Till her hand was caught in a strait
Of her cerement and baffled so
From doing the deed she would;
And her weak foot stumbled across
The grave of a king,
And down she dropt at heavy loss,
And we gloomily covered her face and said,
'We have dreamed the thing;
She is not alive, but dead.'

Now, shall we say
Our Italy lives indeed?
And if it were not for the beat and bray
Of drum and trump of martial men,
Should we feel the underground heave and strain,

Where heroes left their dust as a seed
Sure to emerge one day?
And if it were not for the rhythmic march
Of France and Piedmont's double hosts,
Should we hear the ghosts
Thrill through ruined aisle and arch,
Throb along the frescoed wall,
Whisper an oath by that divine
They left in picture, book, and stone,
That Italy is not dead at all?
Ay, if it were not for the tears in our eyes,
These tears of a sudden passionate joy,
Should we see her arise
From the place where the wicked are overthrown,
Italy, Italy? loosed at length
From the tyrant's thrall,
Pale and calm in her strength?
Pale as the silver cross of Savoy
When the hand that bears the flag is brave,
And not a breath is stirring, save
What is blown
Over the war-trump's lip of brass,
Ere Garibaldi forces the pass!

Ay, it is so, even so.
Ay, and it shall be so.
Each broken stone that long ago
She flung behind her as she went
In discouragement and bewilderment
Through the cairns of Time, and missed her way
Between to-day and yesterday,
Up springs a living man.

And each man stands with his face in the light
Of his own drawn sword,
Ready to do what a hero can.
Wall to sap, or river to ford,
Cannon to front, or foe to pursue,
Still ready to do, and sworn to be true,
As a man and a patriot can.
Piedmontese, Neapolitan,
Lombard, Tuscan, Romagnole,
Each man's body having a soul,—
Count how many they stand,
All of them sons of the land,
Every live man there
Allied to a dead man below,
And the deadest with blood to spare
To quicken a living hand
In case it should ever be slow.
Count how many they come
To the beat of Piedmont's drum,
With faces keener and grayer
Than swords of the Austrian slayer,
All set against the foe.
'Emperor
Evermore.'

Out of the dust, where they ground them,
Out of the holes, where they dogged them,
Out of the hulks, where they wound them
In iron, tortured and flogged them;
Out of the streets, where they chased them,
Taxed them, and then bayoneted them,—
Out of the homes, where they spied on them

(Using their daughters and wives),
Out of the church, where they fretted them,
Rotted their souls and debased them,
Trained them to answer with knives,
Then cursed them all at their prayers!—
Out of cold lands, not theirs,
Where they exiled them, starved them, lied on them;
Back they come like a wind, in vain
Cramped up in the hills, that roars its road
The stronger into the open plain;
Or like a fire that burns the hotter
And longer for the crust of cinder,
Serving better the ends of the potter;
Or like a restrainèd word of God,
Fulfilling itself by what seems to hinder.
'Emperor
Evermore.'

Shout for France and Savoy!
Shout for the helper and doer.
Shout for the good sword's ring,
Shout for the thought still truer.
Shout for the spirits at large
Who passed for the dead this spring,
Whose living glory is sure.
Shout for France and Savoy!
Shout for the council and charge!
Shout for the head of Cavour;
And shout for the heart of a King
That's great with a nation's joy!
Shout for France and Savoy!

Take up the child, Macmahon, though
  Thy hand be red
  From Magenta's dead,
And riding on, in front of the troop,
  In the dust of the whirlwind of war
Through the gate of the city of Milan, stoop
And take up the child to thy saddle-bow,
Nor fear the touch as soft as a flower of his smile
    as clear as a star!
Thou hast a right to the child, we say,
Since the women are weeping for joy as they
Who, by thy help and from this day,
  Shall be happy mothers indeed.
They are raining flowers from terrace and roof:
  Take up the flower in the child.
While the shout goes up of a nation freed
  And heroically self-reconciled,
Till the snow on that peaked Alp aloof
Starts, as feeling God's finger anew,
And all those cold white marble fires
Of mounting saints on the Duomo-spires
  Flicker against the Blue.
    'Emperor
    Evermore.'

    Ay, it is He,
Who rides at the King's right hand!
Leave room to his horse and draw to the side
  Nor press too near in the ecstasy
Of a newly delivered impassioned land:
  He is moved, you see,
He who has done it all.

They call it a cold stern face
But this is Italy
Who rises up to her place!—
For this he fought in his youth,
Of this he dreamed in the past;
The lines of the resolute mouth
Tremble a little at last.
Cry, he has done it all!
'Emperor
Evermore.'

It is not strange that he did it,
Though the deed may seem to strain
To the wonderful, unpermitted,
For such as lead and reign.
But he is strange, this man:
The people's instinct found him
(A wind in the dark that ran
Through a chink where was no door),
And elected him and crowned him
Emperor
Evermore.

Autocrat? let them scoff,
Who fail to comprehend
That a ruler incarnate of
The people, must transcend
All common king-born kings.
These subterranean springs
A sudden outlet winning
Have special virtues to spend.
The people's blood runs through him.
Dilates from head to foot.

Creates him absolute,
And from this great beginning
Evokes a greater end
To justify and renew him—
Emperor
Evermore.

What! did any maintain
That God or the people (think!)
Could make a marvel in vain?—
Out of the water-jar there,
Draw wine that none could drink?
Is this a man like the rest,
This miracle, made unaware
By a rapture of popular air,
And caught to the place that was best?
You think he could barter and cheat
As vulgar diplomates use,
With the people's heart in his breast?
Prate a lie into shape
Lest truth should cumber the road;
Play at the fast and loose
Till the world is strangled with tape;
Maim the soul's complete
To fit the hole of a toad;
And filch the dogman's meat
To feed the offspring of God?

Nay, but he, this wonder,
He cannot palter nor prate,
Though many around him and under,
With intellects trained to the curve
Distrust him in spirit and nerve

Because his meaning is straight.
Measure him ere he depart
With those who have governed and led;
Larger so much by the heart,
Larger so much by the head.
Emperor
Evermore.

He holds that, consenting or dissident,
Nations must move with the time;
Assumes that crime with a precedent
Doubles the guilt of the crime;
—Denies that a slaver's bond,
Or a treaty signed by knaves,
(*Quorum magna pars* and beyond
Was one of an honest name)
Gives an inexpugnable claim
To abolish men into slaves.
Emperor
Evermore.

He will not swagger nor boast
Of his country's meeds, in a tone
Missuiting a great man most
If such should speak of his own;
Nor will he act, on her side,
From motives baser, indeed,
Than a man of noble pride
Can avow for himself at need;
Never, for lucre or laurels,
Or custom, though such should be rife,
Adapting the smaller morals
To measure the larger life.

He, though the merchants persuade,
And the soldiers are eager for strife,
Finds not his country in quarrels
Only to find her in trade,—
While still he accords her such honour
As never to flinch for her sake
Where men put service upon her,
Found heavy to undertake
And scarcely like to be paid :
Believing a nation may act
Unselfishly—shiver a lance
(As the least of her sons may, in fact)
And not for a cause of finance.
Emperor
Evermore.

Great is he,
Who uses his greatness for all.
His name shall stand perpetually
As a name to applaud and cherish,
Not only within the civic wall
For the loyal, but also without
For the generous and free.
Just is he,
Who is just for the popular due
As well as the private debt.
The praise of nations ready to perish
Fall on him,—crown him in view
Of tyrants caught in the net,
And statesmen dizzy with fear and doubt!
And though, because they are many,
And he is merely one,

And nations selfish and cruel
Heap up the inquisitor's fuel
  To kill the body of high intents,
And burn great deeds from their place,
Till this, the greatest of any,
  May seem imperfectly done;
  Courage, whoever circumvents!
Courage, courage, whoever is base!
The soul of a high intent, be it known,
Can die no more than any soul
Which God keeps by Him under the throne;
And this, at whatever interim,
  Shall live, and be consummated
Into the being of deeds made whole.
Courage, courage! happy is he,
  Of whom (himself among the dead
  And silent), this word shall be said:
—That he might have had the world with him,
  But chose to side with suffering men,
  And had the world against him when
He came to deliver Italy.
    Emperor
    Evermore.

FIRST NEWS FROM VILLAFRANCA.

PEACE, peace, peace, do you say?
What!—with the enemy's guns in our ears?
With the country's wrong not rendered back?
What!—while Austria stands at bay
In Mantua, and our Venice bears
The cursed flag of the yellow and black?

Peace, peace, peace, do you say?
And this the Mincio? Where's the fleet,
And where's the sea? Are we all blind
Or mad with the blood shed yesterday,
Ignoring Italy under our feet,
And seeing things before, behind?

Peace, peace, peace, do you say?
What!—uncontested, undenied?
Because we triumph, we succumb?
A pair of Emperors stand in the way,
(One of whom is a man, beside)
To sign and seal our cannons dumb?

No, not Napoleon!—he who mused
At Paris, and at Milan spake,
And at Solferino led the fight:
Not he we trusted, honoured, used
Our hopes and hearts for . . till they break—
Even so, you tell us . . in his sight.

Peace, peace, is still your word?
We say you lie then!—that is plain.
There *is* no peace, and shall be none.
Our very dead would cry 'Absurd!'
And clamour that they died in vain,
And whine to come back to the sun.

Hush! more reverence for the dead!
They've done the most for Italy
Evermore since the earth was fair.
Now would that *we* had died instead,
Still dreaming peace meant liberty,
And did not, could not mean despair.

Peace, you say?—yes, peace, in truth!
But such a peace as the ear can achieve
'Twixt the rifle's click and the rush of the ball,
'Twixt the tiger's spring and the crunch of the tooth,
'Twixt the dying atheist's negative
And God's face—waiting, after all!

A TALE OF VILLAFRANCA.

TOLD IN TUSCANY.

My little son, my Florentine,
Sit down beside my knee,
And I will tell you why the sign
Of joy which flushed our Italy,
Has faded since but yesternight;
And why your Florence of delight
Is mourning as you see.

A great man (who was crowned one day)
Imagined a great Deed:
He shaped it out of cloud and clay,
He touched it finely till the seed
Possessed the flower: from heart and brain
He fed it with large thoughts humane,
To help a people's need.

He brought it out into the sun—
They blessed it to his face:
'O great pure Deed, that hast undone
So many bad and base!
O generous Deed, heroic Deed,
Come forth, be perfected, succeed,
Deliver by God's grace!'

Then sovereigns, statesmen, north and south,
Rose up in wrath and fear,
And cried, protesting by one mouth,
'What monster have we here?
A great Deed at this hour of day?
A great just deed—and not for pay?
Absurd,—or insincere.'

'And if sincere, the heavier blow
In that case we shall bear,
For where's our blessed 'status quo,'
Our holy treaties, where,—
Our rights to sell a race, or buy,
Protect and pillage, occupy,
And civilize despair?'

Some muttered that the great Deed meant
A great pretext to sin;
And others, the pretext, so lent,
Was heinous (to begin).
Volcanic terms of 'great' and 'just?'
Admit such tongues of flame, the crust
Of time and law falls in.

A great Deed in this world of ours?
Unheard of the pretence is:
It threatens plainly the great Powers;
Is fatal in all senses.
A just Deed in the world?—call out
The rifles! be not slack about
The national defences!

And many murmured, 'From this source
What red blood must be poured!'
And some rejoined, ''Tis even worse;
What red tape is ignored!'
All cursed the Doer for an evil
Called here, enlarging on the Devil,—
There, monkeying the Lord!

Some said, it could not be explained,
Some, could not be excused;
And others, 'Leave it unrestrained,
Gehenna's self is loosed.'
And all cried, 'Crush it, maim it, gag it!
Set dog-toothed lies to tear it ragged,
Truncated and traduced!'

But He stood sad before the sun,
(The peoples felt their fate).
'The world is many,—I am one;
My great Deed was too great.
God's fruit of justice ripens slow:
Men's souls are narrow; let them grow.
My brothers, we must wait.'

The tale is ended, child of mine,
Turned graver at my knee.
They say your eyes, my Florentine,
Are English: it may be:
And yet I've marked as blue a pair
Following the doves across the square
At Venice by the sea.

Ah, child! ah, child! I cannot say
A word more. You conceive
The reason now, why just to-day
We see our Florence grieve.
Ah, child, look up into the sky!
In this low world, where great Deeds die,
What matter if we live?

A VIEW ACROSS THE ROMAN CAMPAGNA.

1861.

Over the dumb Campagna-sea,
Out in the offing through mist and rain,
Saint Peter's Church heaves silently
Like a mighty ship in pain,
Facing the tempest with struggle and strain.

Motionless waifs of ruined towers,
Soundless breakers of desolate land:
The sullen surf of the mist devours
That mountain-range upon either hand,
Eaten away from its outline grand.

And over the dumb Campagna-sea
Where the ship of the Church heaves on to wreck,
Alone and silent as God must be,
The Christ walks. Ay, but Peter's neck
Is stiff to turn on the foundering deck.

Peter, Peter, if such be thy name,
Now leave the ship for another to steer,
And proving thy faith evermore the same,
Come forth, tread out through the dark and drear,
Since He who walks on the sea is here.

Peter, Peter! He does not speak;
He is not as rash as in old Galilee:
Safer a ship, though it toss and leak,
Than a reeling foot on a rolling sea!
And he's got to be round in the girth, thinks he.

Peter, Peter! He does not stir;
His nets are heavy with silver fish;
He reckons his gains, and is keen to infer
—'The broil on the shore, if the Lord should wish;
But the sturgeon goes to the Cæsar's dish.'

Peter, Peter! thou fisher of men,
Fisher of fish wouldst thou live instead?
Haggling for pence with the other Ten,
Cheating the market at so much a head,
Griping the Bag of the traitor Dead?

At the triple crow of the Gallic cock
Thou weep'st not, thou, though thine eyes be dazed:
What bird comes next in the tempest-shock?
—Vultures! see,—as when Romulus gazed,—
To inaugurate Rome for a world amazed!

A COURT LADY.

Her hair was tawny with gold, her eyes with purple were dark,
Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a red and restless spark.

Never was lady of Milan nobler in name and in race;
Never was lady of Italy fairer to see in the face.

Never was lady on earth more true as woman and wife,
Larger in judgment and instinct, prouder in manners and life.

She stood in the early morning, and said to her maidens, 'Bring
That silken robe made ready to wear at the court of the king.

'Bring me the clasps of diamond, lucid, clear of the mote,
Clasp me the large at the waist, and clasp me the small at the throat.

'Diamonds to fasten the hair, and diamonds to fasten the sleeves,
Laces to drop from their rays, like a powder of snow from the eaves.'

Gorgeous she entered the sunlight which gathered her up
in a flame,
While, straight in her open carriage, she to the hospital
came.

In she went at the door, and gazing from end to end,
'Many and low are the pallets, but each is the place of
a friend.'

Up she passed through the wards, and stood at a young
man's bed:
Bloody the band on his brow, and livid the droop of his
head.

'Art thou a Lombard, my brother? Happy art thou,'
she cried,
And smiled like Italy on him: he dreamed in her face
and died.

Pale with his passing soul, she went on still to a second:
He was a grave hard man, whose years by dungeons were
reckoned.

Wounds in his body were sore, wounds in his life were
sorer.
'Art thou a Romagnole?' Her eyes drove lightnings
before her.

'Austrian and priest had joined to double and tighten the
cord
Able to bind thee, O strong one,—free by the stroke of
a sword.

'Now be grave for the rest of us, using the life overcast
To ripen our wine of the present, (too new,) in glooms of the past.'

Down she stepped to a pallet where lay a face like a girl's
Young, and pathetic with dying,—a deep black hole in the curls.

'Art thou from Tuscany, brother? and seest thou, dreaming in pain,
Thy mother stand in the piazza, searching the List of the slain?'

Kind as a mother herself, she touched his cheeks with her hands:
'Blessed is she who has borne thee, although she should weep as she stands.'

On she passed to a Frenchman, his arm carried off by a ball:
Kneeling, . . 'O more than my brother! how shall I thank thee for all?

'Each of the heroes around us has fought for his land and line,
But *thou* hast fought for a stranger, in hate of a wrong not thine.

'Happy are all free peoples, too strong to be dispossessed:
But blessed are those among nations, who dare to be strong for the rest!'

Ever she passed on her way, and came to a couch where pined
One with a face from Venetia, white with a hope out of mind.

Long she stood and gazed, and twice she tried at the name,
But two great crystal tears were all that faltered and came.

Only a tear for Venice?—she turned as in passion and loss,
And stooped to his forehead and kissed it, as if she were kissing the cross.

Faint with that strain of heart she moved on then to another,
Stern and strong in his death. 'And dost thou suffer, my brother?'

Holding his hands in hers:—'Out of the Piedmont lion
Cometh the sweetness of freedom! sweetest to live or to die on.'

Holding his cold rough hands,—'Well, oh, well have ye done
In noble, noble Piedmont, who would not be noble alone.'

Back he fell while she spoke. She rose to her feet with a spring,—
'That was a Piedmontese! and this is the Court of the King.'

PARTING LOVERS.

Siena, 1860.

I LOVE thee, love thee, Giulio;
Some call me cold, and some demure;
And if thou hast ever guessed that so
I loved thee . . . well, the proof was poor,
And no one could be sure.

Before thy song (with shifted rhymes
To suit my name) did I undo
The persian? If it stirred sometimes,
Thou hast not seen a hand push through
A foolish flower or two.

My mother listening to my sleep,
Heard nothing but a sigh at night,—
The short sigh rippling on the deep,
When hearts run out of breath and sight
Of men, to God's clear light.

When others named thee,—thought thy brows
Were straight, thy smile was tender,—'Here
He comes between the vineyard-rows!'
I said not 'Ay,' nor waited, Dear,
To feel thee step too near.

I left such things to bolder girls,—
Olivia or Clotilda. Nay,
When that Clotilda, through her curls,
Held both thine eyes in hers one day,
I marvelled, let me say.

I could not try the woman's trick:
Between us straightway fell the blush
Which kept me separate, blind and sick.
A wind came with thee in a flush,
As blown through Sinai's bush.

But now that Italy invokes
Her young men to go forth and chase
The foe or perish,—nothing chokes
My voice or drives me from the place.
I look thee in the face.

I love thee. It is understood,
Confest: I do not shrink or start.
No blushes! all my body's blood
Has gone to greaten this poor heart,
That, loving, we may part.

Our Italy invokes the youth
To die if need be. Still there's room,
Though earth is strained with dead in truth:
Since twice the lilies were in bloom
They have not grudged a tomb.

And many a plighted maid and wife
And mother, who can say since then
'My country,'—cannot say through life
'My son,' 'my spouse,' 'my flower of men,'
And not weep dumb again.

Heroic males the country bears,—
  But daughters give up more than sons:
Flags wave, drums beat, and unawares
  You flash your souls out with the guns,
    And take your Heaven at once.

But we!—we empty heart and home
  Of life's life, love! We bear to think
You're gone,—to feel you may not come,—
  To hear the door-latch stir and clink,
    Yet no more you! . . . nor sink.

Dear God! when Italy is one,
  Complete, content from bound to bound,
Suppose, for my share, earth 's undone,
  By one grave in 't!—as one small wound
    Will kill a man, 'tis found.

What then? If love's delight must end,
  At least we'll clear its truth from flaws.
I love thee, love thee, sweetest friend!
  Now take my sweetest without pause,
    And help the nation's cause.

And thus, of noble Italy
  We'll both be worthy. Let her show
The future how we made her free,
  Not sparing life . . . nor Giulio,
    Nor this . . . this heartbreak! Go.

MOTHER AND POET.

TURIN, AFTER NEWS FROM GAETA, 1861.

DEAD! One of them shot by the sea in the east,
And one of them shot in the west by the sea.
Dead! both my boys! When you sit at the feast
And are wanting a great song for Italy free,
Let none look at *me!*

Yet I was a poetess only last year,
And good at my art, for a woman, men said;
But *this* woman, *this*, who is agonized here,
—The east sea and west sea rhyme on in her head
For ever instead.

What art can a woman be good at? Oh, vain!
What art *is* she good at, but hurting her breast
With the milk-teeth of babes, and a smile at the pain?
Ah boys, how you hurt! you were strong as you pressed,
And I proud, by that test.

What art's for a woman? To hold on her knees
Both darlings; to feel all their arms round her throat,
Cling, strangle a little; to sew by degrees
And 'broider the long-clothes and neat little coat;
To dream and to doat.

To teach them . . . It stings there! *I* made them indeed
Speak plain the word *country*. *I* taught them, no doubt,
That a country 's a thing men should die for at need.
I prated of liberty, rights, and about
The tyrant cast out.

And when their eyes flashed . . . O my beautiful eyes! . . .
I exulted; nay, let them go forth at the wheels
Of the guns, and denied not. But then the surprise
When one sits quite alone! Then one weeps, then one kneels!
God, how the house feels!

At first, happy news came, in gay letters moiled
With my kisses,—of camp-life and glory, and how
They both loved me; and, soon coming home to be spoiled,
In return would fan off every fly from my brow
With their green laurel-bough.

Then was triumph at Turin: 'Ancona was free!'
And some one came out of the cheers in the street,
With a face pale as stone, to say something to me.
My Guido was dead! I fell down at his feet,
While they cheered in the street.

I bore it; friends soothed me; my grief looked sublime
As the ransom of Italy. One boy remained
To be leant on and walked with, recalling the time
When the first grew immortal, while both of us strained
To the height he had gained.

And letters still came, shorter, sadder, more strong
Writ now but in one hand, 'I was not to faint,—
One loved me for two—would be with me ere long:
And *Viva l'Italia!—he* died for, our saint,
Who forbids our complaint.'

My Nanni would add, 'he was safe, and aware
Of a presence that turned off the balls,—was imprest
It was Guido himself, who knew what I could bear,
And how 'twas impossible, quite dispossessed,
To live on for the rest.'

On which, without pause, up the telegraph-line
Swept smoothly the next news from Gaeta:—*Shot.*
Tell his mother. Ah, ah, 'his,' 'their' mother,—not 'mine,'
No voice says '*My* mother' again to me. What!
You think Guido forgot?

Are souls straight so happy that, dizzy with Heaven,
They drop earth's affections, conceive not of woe?
I think not. Themselves were too lately forgiven
Through THAT Love and Sorrow which reconciled so
The Above and Below.

O Christ of the five wounds, who look'dst through the dark
To the face of Thy mother! consider, I pray,
How we common mothers stand desolate, mark,
Whose sons, not being Christs, die with eyes turned away,
And no last word to say!

Both boys dead? but that's out of nature. We all
Have been patriots, yet each house must always keep one.
'Twere imbecile, hewing out roads to a wall;
And, when Italy 's made, for what end is it done
If we have not a son?

Ah, ah, ah! when Gaeta's taken, what then?
When the fair wicked queen sits no more at her sport
Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls out of men?
When the guns of Cavalli with final retort
Have cut the game short?

When Venice and Rome kept their new jubilee,
When your flag takes all heaven for its white, green, and red,
When *you* have your country from mountain to sea,
When King Victor has Italy's crown on his head,
(And *I* have my Dead)—

What then? Do not mock me. Ah, ring your bells low,
And burn your lights faintly! *My* country is *there*,
Above the star pricked by the last peak of snow:
My Italy's THERE, with my brave civic Pair,
To disfranchise despair!

Forgive me. Some women bear children in strength,
And bite back the cry of their pain in self-scorn;
But the birth-pangs of nations will wring us at length
Into wail such as this—and we sit on forlorn
When the man-child is born.

Dead! One of them shot by the sea in the east,
And one of them shot in the west by the sea.
Both! both my boys! If in keeping the feast
You want a great song for your Italy free,
Let none look at *me*.

[This was Laura Savio, of Turin, a poetess and patriot, whose sons were killed at Ancona and Gaeta.]

NATURE'S REMORSES.

ROME, 1861.

HER soul was bred by a throne, and fed
From the sucking-bottle used in her race,
On starch and water (for mother's milk
Which gives a larger growth instead),
And out of the natural liberal grace,
Was swaddled away in violet silk.

And young and kind, and royally blind,
Forth she stepped from her palace-door
On three-piled carpet of compliments,
Curtains of incense drawn by the wind
In between her for evermore
And daylight issues of events.

On she drew, as a queen might do,
To meet a Dream of Italy,—
Of magical town and musical wave,
Where even a god, his amulet blue
Of shining sea, in an ecstasy
Dropt and forgot in a nereid's cave.

Down she goes, as the soft wind blows,
To live more smoothly than mortals can,
To love and to reign as queen and wife,
To wear a crown that smells of a rose,
And still, with a sceptre as light as a fan,
Beat sweet time to the song of life.

What is this? As quick as a kiss
Falls a smile from her girlish mouth!
The lion-people has left its lair,
Roaring along her garden of bliss,
And the fiery under-world of the south
Scorched a way to the upper air.

And a fire-stone ran in the form of a man,
Burningly, boundingly, fatal and fell,
Bowling the kingdom down! Where was the king?
She had heard somewhat, since life began,
Of terrors on earth, and horrors in hell,
But never, never of such a thing!

You think she dropped when her dream was stopped,
When the blotch of Bourbon blood inlay,
Lividly rank, her new lord's cheek?
Not so. Her high heart overtopped
The royal part she had come to play.
Only the men in that hour were weak.

And twice a wife by her ravaged life,
And twice a queen by her kingdom lost,
She braved the shock and the counter-shock
Of hero and traitor, bullet and knife,
While Italy pushed, like a vengeful ghost,
That son of the Cursed from Gaeta's rock.

What will ye give her, who could not deliver,
German Princesses? A laurel-wreath
All over-scored with your signatures,
Graces, Serenities, Highnesses ever?
Mock her not, fresh from the truth of Death,
Conscious of dignities higher than yours.

What will ye put in your casket shut,
Ladies of Paris, in sympathy's name?
Guizot's daughter, what have you brought her?
Withered immortelles, long ago cut
For guilty dynasties perished in shame,
Putrid to memory, Guizot's daughter?

Ah poor queen! so young and serene!
What shall we do for her, now hope 's done,
Standing at Rome in these ruins old,
She too a ruin and no more a queen?
Leave her that diadem made by the sun
Turning her hair to an innocent gold.

Ay, bring close to her, as 'twere a rose, to her,
Yon free child, from an Apennine city
Singing for Italy,—dumb in the place!
Something like solace, let us suppose, to her
Given, in that homage of wonder and pity,
By his pure eyes to her beautiful face.

Nature, excluded, savagely brooded;
Ruined all queendom and dogmas of state:
Then in reaction remorseful and mild,
Rescues the womanhood, nearly eluded,
Shows her what's sweetest in womanly fate—
Sunshine from Heaven, and the eyes of a child.

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT.

WHAT was he doing, the great god Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river ?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river.

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the river :
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

High on the shore sat the great god Pan,
While turbidly flowed the river ;
And hacked and hewed as a great god can,
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of a leaf indeed
To prove it fresh from the river.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
(How tall it stood in the river !)
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor dry empty thing
In holes, as he sat by the river.

'This is the way,' laughed the great god Pan,
(Laughed while he sat by the river,)
'The only way, since gods began
To make sweet music, they could succeed.'
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
He blew in power by the river.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!
Piercing sweet by the river!
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
Came back to dream on the river.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
To laugh as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man:
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain,—
For the reed which grows nevermore again
As a reed with the reeds in the river.

THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH.

ROME. MAY. 1861.

'Now give us lands where the olives grow,'
Cried the North to the South,
'Where the sun with a golden mouth can blow
Blue bubbles of grapes down a vineyard-row!'
Cried the North to the South.

'Now give us men from the sunless plain,'
Cried the South to the North,
'By need of work in the snow and the rain,
Made strong, and brave by familiar pain!'
Cried the South to the North.

'Give lucider hills and intenser seas,'
Said the North to the South,
'Since ever by symbols and bright degrees
'Art, childlike, climbs to the dear Lord's knees,'
Said the North to the South.

'Give strenuous souls for belief and prayer,'
Said the South to the North,
'That stand in the dark on the lowest stair,
While affirming of God, 'He is certainly there,'
Said the South to the North.

'Yet oh, for the skies that are softer and higher!'
Sighed the North to the South;
'For the flowers that blaze, and the trees that aspire,
And the insects made of a song or a fire!'
Sighed the North to the South.

'And oh, for a seer to discern the same!'
Sighed the South to the North!
'For a poet's tongue of baptismal flame,
To call the tree or the flower by its name!'
Sighed the South to the North.

The North sent therefore a man of men
As a grace to the South;
And thus to Rome came Andersen.
—'*Alas, but must you take him again?*'
Said the South to the North.

THE END.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
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